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Some of these stories are reprinted from the "Rosary Magazine" through the courtesy of the Reverend W. P. McIntyre, O.P. to whom I wish to return thanks for this and many other kindnesses.

JUST STORIES

BY
GERTRUDE M. O'REILLY



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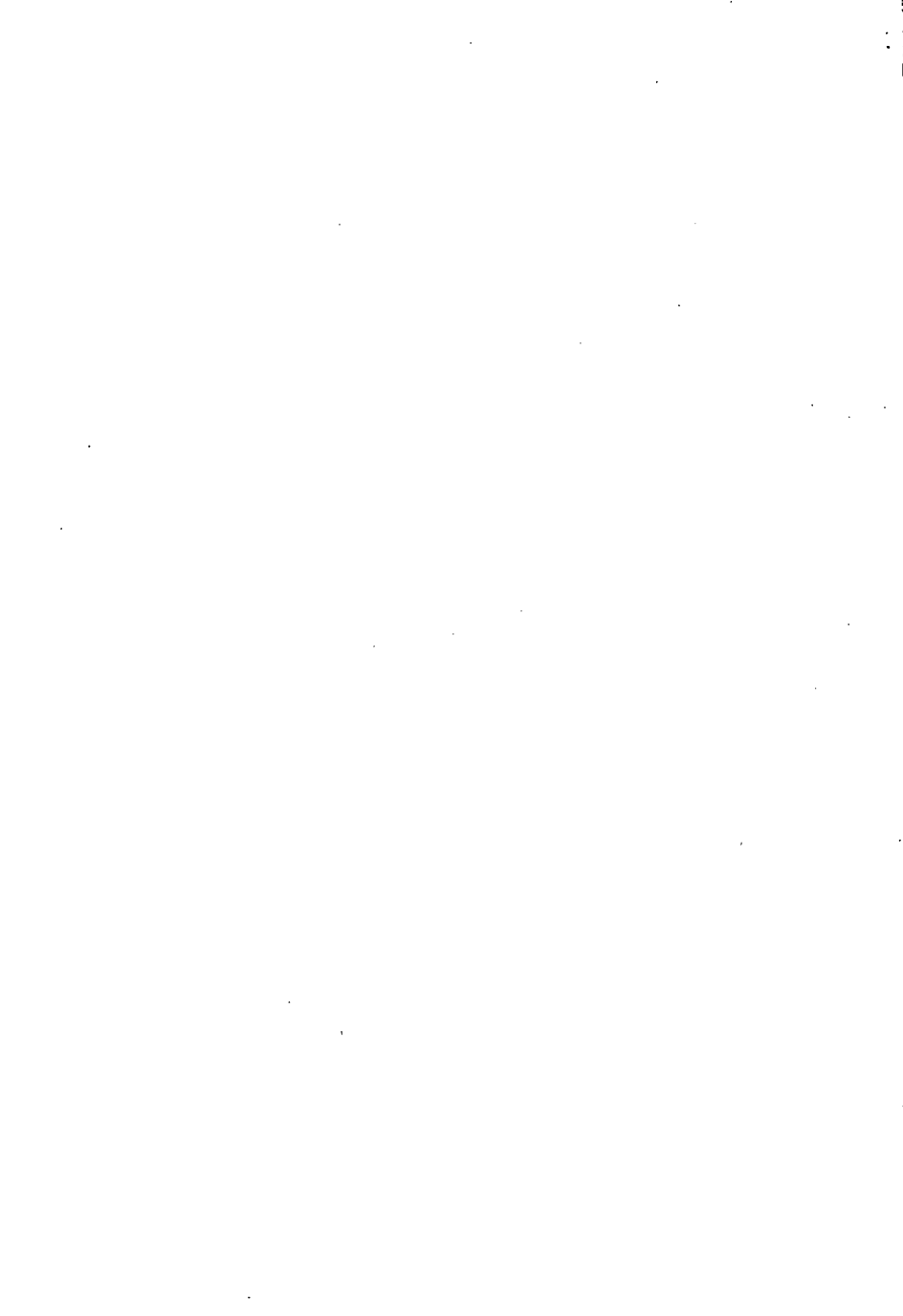
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To

J. M. S.

whose busy brain gave me
many a plot and whose loving sympathy
encouraged me to write

I dedicate
this little book



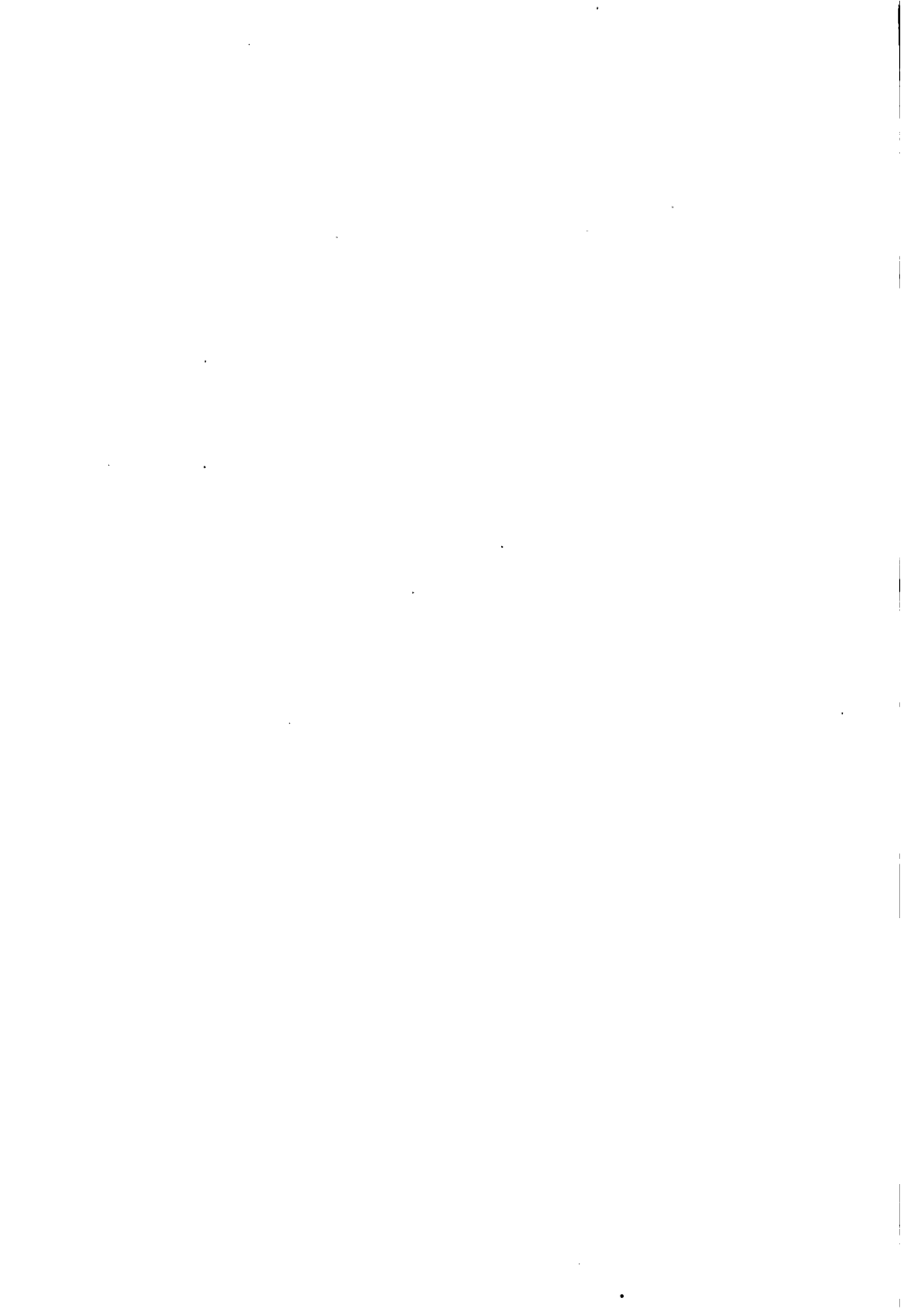
Go, little whiff of country air,
And bring God's sky so blue
To the hustling, eager, pris'ner throng,
Who long for you.

Go blowing gently down the way,
And tell of flowers and sun;
Of the simple, peaceful life of home,
Where rest is won.

J. M. S.

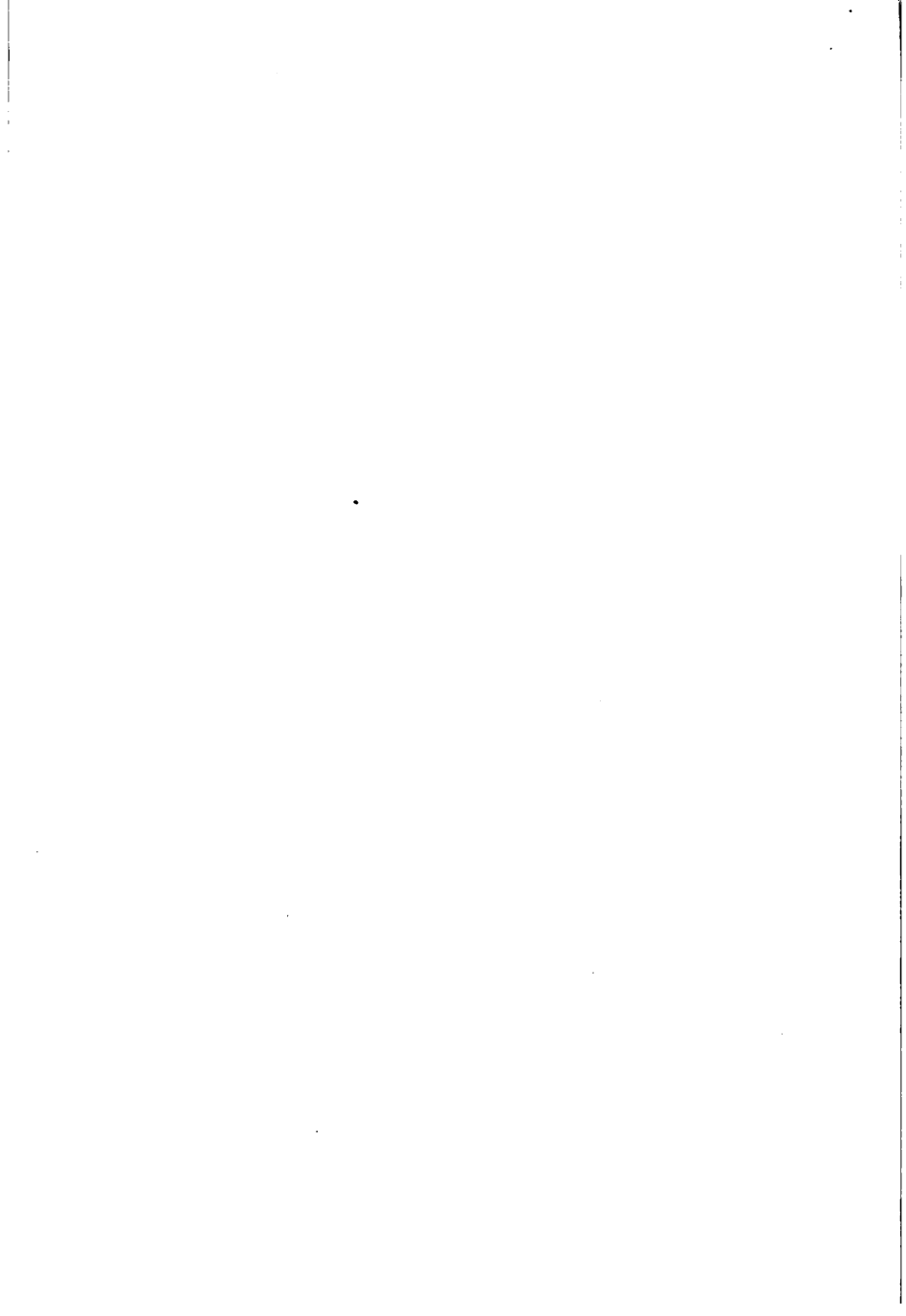
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FOREWORD

As you step from the gangway at New York your ears are greeted by "Step lively, please! Step lively!" It is the keynote of the new life on which you are entering, and as you go down the busy streets, pass through the crowded stores, you can feel the same spirit. Each lined and anxious face seems to shout at you, "Step lively, please! Step lively!" until you, too, become absorbed in the rush, and consciously or unconsciously join the universal chorus. I, also have come under the spell, but often in the whirling day, when mind and heart are sick with the unceasing stress of life, my thoughts go back to the long, restful days beside Galway Bay; to the still evenings in the Cork hills; to the pleasant, friendly greeting from the passing stranger, to the golden sunsets, when we almost seemed to be looking straight in at the gates of heaven, and the memory gave me rest and joy. These little stories are the fruit of these moments of retrospection, written down in the hope that they may bring the pleasant memory of home to those who like myself have wandered, struck perhaps with the "fairy wisp" of the pooka, and give some little glimpse of Ireland to those who have not had the joy of looking on her face.



THE PLACE OF PEACE



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"Is it about the buildin' o' that church ye want to know, asthor? It's the queer story!"

The old man paused reflectively, gazing down at the little building in the hollow. It was one of the earliest examples of Christian architecture in Ireland, a low, steep-roofed stone "cill," covered in with immense slabs of solid rock. The graveyard was a waving sea of fairy-grass, dog-daisies, poppies and meadow-sweet; the very crevices in the stone walls bore their glowing burden of foxglove, fern and lichen, and the soft warm evening breeze carried up the sweet, faint perfume to the loose stone wall where 'Liam and I sat together.

'Liam seemed slow to begin, sitting in silence smoking his pipe, while I waited contentedly. After a few more whiffs he knocked out the ashes on the palm of his hand, put the pipe

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leisurely in his pocket and turned to me once more.

"Yes, it's a queer story. It happened a powerful long time ago when there were kings livin' in them parts, an' the Fenians were fightin' an' the saints were teachin' in the schools—glory be to God, it must have been a great place entirely in them days! But sure they're dead an' gone, an' many a one lies buried there beyant, God rest them, an' the verra name o' him that built the place is clean forgot.

"He was a holy man, a bishop some do be sayin', an' he kem from Scotland. He had a big name over there an' the people 'd be comin' from all parts to hear him preach an' to get him to read a blessin' over them that 'd be ailin', till bit by bit he got to be thinkin' to himself: 'Faith, it must be a great saint entirely I am, there isn't one that does be workin' such miracles, or has such crowds runnin' after them!' Well, pride goes before a fall they say, an' sure enough me hayro (God forgimme speakin' like that o' the blessed saint) got a fine takin' down one day. He had been talkin' all day to the people—mebbe it was a station, or a pattern,

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or the like o' that—an' at last he'd got shut o' them an' was havin' his bit an' sup, when all of a sudden an angel stood afore him. Before ye'd look round ye he was up, bowin' an' scrapin', an' says he: 'Sir, it's an honor to me to be havin' ye,' says he, 'an' is there annything I could be doin' for yer honor?'

"'There is so,' says the angel, 'though by the same token, it's more for yerself than for me; for,' says he, 'if ye don't folla me words ye'll never look on the face o' God.'

"'Yerra,' says the saint, 'that's a queer thing to be sayin' to me, an' me workin' miracles by the dozen every day o' me life!'

"'Well, queer or not, it's the Gospel truth I'm tellin' ye,' says the angel, an' ye could see by the look in his eye that there was no foolin' about it. 'This verra day ye must get up an' widout a word to man or mortal, get into that little boat over'—an' he pointed to a bit o' a fishin' boat that was no more fit for the open sea than a cockle-shell—'an' takin' down the sail, leave it to carry ye wherever it will. After a day an' a night ye'll come to a strange land, an' ye'll get out an', leavin' the boat, ye'll walk

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on till ye come to a weeshie house. There ye'll go in, an' ye'll find a woman sellin' wine; an' she has never given annyone fair measure for their money, filling up their mug wid water—yet she is nearer the kingdom o' God than you.' That was a fine slap in the face for the poor man, an' he thinkin' the world an' all o' himself, to be tol' he wasn't the equal o' a woman runnin' a shebeen, but sure there was worse to come.

“‘Ye can stay there that night,’ says the angel, ‘an’ the next day ye must walk on, always facin’ for the west, an’ never stayin’ two nights in the one place; an’ after ye have walked for a day an’ a night ye’ll come to a powerful big church; go in an’ be prayin’ for mercy while yer waitin’. After a bit a poor omadhaun’ll run in that never learned to say his beads, an’ never was in the house o’ God afore, an’ he’ll take off his hat an’ coat an’ hang them up on a beam o’ the sun; an’ he is nearer the kingdom o’ God than you.’

“The poor saint was so taken down at bein’ likened to a fool he hadn’t the gumption to say a word, so the angel went on: ‘After that,’ says he, ‘ye’ll go through the mountains till ye

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come to a dark an' lonesome house where there is work for you to do; an' that night ye'll stay in the house, an' it kep' by a man that steals sheep in the hills—but he is nearer the kingdom o' God than you. An' havin' learned yer lesson in them three places, ye'll walk on an' on till on the western shore ye'll meet a woman lookin' for sheep; folla her, an' where she fin's them build yer cell, for that is to be yer place o' penance an' there will be the place o' yer resurrection.' An' wid that the angel flew off, not givin' the saint time to open his mouth.

"All that day the poor man was wanderin' in an' out an' thinkin' what 'd he do at all, at all; he was doubtin' was it all a dream, or could it be true that he was to go off like that, a wanderer on the face o' the earth afore he could save his soul; but afore night he'd med up his mind. There must ha' been a power o' good in the creature for all he was so set up in himself, for it's no easy job to start off like that, the Lord knows where, an' mebbe to find it was only a fool's work in the end.

"Annyhow, he went in the wee boat, an' sure enough, in a day an' a night, the waves o' the sea pitched him up on the shores o' Wexford.

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It was all one to him where he was, for he knew his way no more nor the babe unborn, but on he went till he kem to a house. It was a bit o' a mud cottage like they have over there, not med o' rock like here, an' it was terrible dark an' low an' the tatch in an awful way entirely, green wid the weeds an' as much grass on it as 'd feed a cow!

" 'It isn't much o' a house,' says he to himself, 'but sure, I must go through wid it.' An' wid that he lifted the latch and went in.

" 'God save all here,' says he.

" 'God save ye kindly,' says the woman' o' the house, but sorra a bit could he see her wid the eyes burnt out o' his head wid the smoke o' the turf. As he got a bit used to it, he saw a few drunken lookin' blagguards sittin' by the fire an' a poor limp wisp o' a woman stannin' lookin' at him.

" 'Could ye gimme a bite o' somethin'?' says he. 'I'm famished an' footsore.'

" 'Just sit down,' says she, settin' the chair an' dustin' it off wid her apron, but he was keepin' his weather eye open, an' as soon as she went for the drink he was after her. Sure enough, he saw her drawin' the wine only half-

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way up the mug, fillin' it wid water, an' all the time she was cryin salt tears an' mumblin' somethin' to herself.

" 'Orrah, woman, dear,' says he, 'what's on ye, at all? Why don't ye give an honest measure? An' why d'ye be cryin' an' talkin' to yerself like that?'

" 'Och wirrastrua,' cried she, wringin' her hands an' rockin' back'ard an' for'ard, "what'll I do at all? Sure, why did ye folla me?"

" 'Yerra, there is no use in frettin', me poor woman,' says he, 'I'll not let on I saw ye, if ye only tell me the truth.'

" 'Sure as God's above me,' says she, 'I wouldn't wrong a soul if I was let alone, but me man half murders me if I give the true measure, an' it's breakin' me heart it is, for when I'm drawin' the red wine I do be thinkin' o' the blood shed on the cross, an' it's prayin' the Lord I am through His sufferin's to forgimme me sins.'

" 'Widout a word out o' him the saint went, thinkin' in his own mind that it 'd be a long time till he'd be takin' his sins to heart like that, 'an', says he to himself, 'sure it's a sinner

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I am, an' I thinkin' meself a saint!—so ye see he larned his first lesson.

“All that day an' the next mornin' he was walkin', till by the time the sun was well up he kem to a great big church set at the foot o' the mountains. In he went, kneeling down just inside the door—for ye see he'd larned he was only a sinner—an' he wasn't long there when in kem a queer lookin' chap wid his feet an' legs bare, his hair all hangin' roun' his face an' a dazed wil' look in his eyes. ‘Sure this must be the omadhaun,’ says he to himself, keepin' a sharp lookout to see what he'd do. In a minnit a bright beam o' the sun kem through the winda, all red an' blue an' yalla wid the colors o' the glass, an' the fool, seein' it, cried out wid delight, an' takin' off his hat an' coat threw them up over the beam; an' faith it's a queer thing, but there they hung as easy as ye please, an' the fool began singin' a song to himself as sweet as a bird, an' ran dancin' out into the air.

“‘Orrah, wait, wait!’ cries the saint, runnin' after him. The poor innercent kem back. ‘What makes ye go singin' like that?’ says the saint; ‘are ye always happy an' content?’

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“ ‘An’ for why not?’ says he. ‘Sure, I have all I could be askin’ up on the mountains. The birds do be singin’ for me, an’ the flowers bloomin’, an’ times the sun is shinin’ an’ the sky so clear an’ blue; an’ then when the storm comes up sure it’s grand to hear the wind in the trees, an’ see the lightnin’ flashin’ round. An’ I want for nothin’; the neighbors gimme the bit and sup, an’ there’s always a haystack to sleep on. Sure it’s a grand life I have, glory be to God!’ an’ wid that he ran away, singin’ an’ leppin’, an’ the saint went back to the church, thinkin’ to himself: ‘Sure, many’s the time I was grumblin’ an’ growlin’—an’ I wid full an’ plenty—an’ there’s that poor innercent singin’ an’ praisin’ God, an’ he wid half nothin’. Sure it’s on me knees day an’ night I should be, ongrateful ol’ sinner that I am!’ An’ that’s how he learned his second lesson.

“The whole o’ that night he stayed in the church, thinkin’ an’ prayin’, an’ the next mornin’ off he set, up into the mountains, trampin’ along an’ restin’ now an’ then, till the night fell an’ the moon kem up, clear an’ white, makin’ the whole worl’ look like silver; then the poor creature lay down under a rock an’

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slep'. When the mornin' broke, on he walked, footsore an' tired, an' it was dark afore he kem to a queer, lonesome lookin' house widout a sign o' life about it; there wasn't as much as a whiff o' smoke comin' out o' the chimney.

"'But sure,' says he, 'it'll gimme shelter for the night, an' mebbe it's the place I'm to find me work'; an' sure enough, when he went in he foun' an ol' man an' his wife lyin' on a bed in the corner. They were that ol' ye'd wonner that the life was in them at all, an' ye'd be doubtin' it was there on'y for the shinin' o' their eyes.

"'God save ye, stranger,' says the ol' man, 'who are ye at all that comes this way?'

"'I am a poor sinner travellin' to find the savin' o' me soul,' says he.

"'Ye're more nor that,' put in the woman; 'ye're a priest o' God. Well I know it, for day an' night, near a hun'ed year, I've prayed that we wouldn't go widout the priest, an' this night we're goin',' says she, 'me man an' me-self, an' that's why yer come.' Wid that the sayin' o' the angel came back to him, an' he knelt down beside the bed an' med the ol pair

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ready for the long journey, an' by the mornin' they were gone, God rest them!

"When the day was comin' in, he was startin' off on his way when down the boreen kem a man wid a dead sheep on his back. He was well on in life, a fine, strappin' big fella, but wid a weary sorraful look on his face. When he laid eyes on the stranger comin' out o' the door, he stopped up wid never a word but, 'Well?'

" 'Well,' says the saint, 'yer late. God comfort ye the day.' The man went straight past him widout a word, throwin' the sheep on the step, an' stood lookin' down on the dead wid the big tears rollin' down his cheeks.

" 'Orrah, don't take on like that,' says the saint; 'ye were a good son to them an' they died happy. God rest them! But I can't be stayin' any longer,' says he, 'so afore I go tell me this: Why did ye steal the sheep?'

" 'Sure, what else could I be doin'?' says he. 'They were too ol' for me to leave them, an' up here I could get no work to keep them, an' they had to have the bit to eat. But now,' says he, 'glory bè to God, I can be an honest man, an'

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wid His help I'll never lay a finger on as much as a straw belongin' to another.'

"The sun was goin' down by now, so the saint went on his journey, thinkin' to himself: 'Mebbe there's many another doin' what looks wrong an' there no harm in his heart; orrah, it's too hard I was always.' An' that's how he got his third lesson.

"For three long days he walked on an' on over the hills an' the bog, thinkin' an' prayin' an' watchin' the birds an' the flowers an' listenin' to the wind whisperin' in his ear. Did ye ever listen to the soun's ye hear on them still, hot summer nights an' be wonnerin' what they might be sayin' to ye? Mebbe they're tellin' o' the peace o' heaven above. Annyhow, I wouldn't be doubtin' that the saint was larnin' many a lesson when he was lyin' out on the hills at night, sleepin' an' wakin'. But sure the longest road comes to an end, an' at last he kem to that gap over," pointing to a distant gap in the hills to our right, purple and gold in their cloak of heather and gorse; "an' as he kem through he heard a woman callin' to him.

" 'Hie, there,' says she, 'did ye happen to see

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a couple o' sheep strayin' as ye kem over the hill?"

" 'No, then,' says he, 'but God grant ye find them soon, an', ' says he, 'I'll go wid ye to look for them.' He was thinkin' to himself what the angel had said: 'Where she fin's them, build a cell, for that is to be yer place o' penance an' there'll be the place o' yer resurrection.' Just then they kem roun' the bend, an' the sheep were browsin' on the medda where the church is now. So there he settled an' built the cell, an' afore long there were more crowds than ever after him, an' they had to put up the church, just as ye see it to-day. They do be sayin' that it'll never fall till the Judgment Day is comin'. When Cromwell kem to them parts, bad luck to him, he tried to break it down, but sorra a budge could he put on it, though ye can see the marks o' his cannon an' batterin'-rams all over it. Sure enough it's a queer story," he repeated meditatively, "but a power o' queer things happened in them days, an' we can be learnin' a lot from them still."

THE PEELER AND THE GOAT

THE PEELER AND THE GOAT

HE WAS a fine figure of a man, tall an' well set up, as most of the peelers are, an' he was pretty warm too, with his pension, the "Board" cottage an' the bit in the savin's bank; an' she was a dacent poor woman, with all that she was sharp-tongued when ye got on the wrong side o' her. He had buried his wife them three years gone an' was livin' by himself, without chick or child, so all his time an' care was spent on his patch o' garden—an' sure it was a sight to see! Glory be to God! if ye on'y could be seein' the posies all roun' the pitaties an' cabbages! There'd be primroses, an' daffidillies, an' sweet peas, an' roses as big an' as red as me fist, an' I couldn't be tellin' ye half, but sure it was the prettiest picture ye ever laid eyes on, with big, white shiny rocks all up the sides of the footpath an' weenie little pebbles set close together for ye t' be walkin' over. There wasn't one but 'd be stoppin' to look at it as they'd be passin' by, an' mebbe he wasn't proud o' it!—small blame to him.

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Kate was livin' right over on the other side o' the road, an' faith there wasn't much that was flow'ry about her or her garden. She an' it were as neat an' clean as a new pin, but had sorra a bit o' ornamentation. She was a thin, sharp, scrawny little crature that took in washin', God help her, an' day in, day out, ye'd see her in the front o' the place rubbin' an' scrubbin' an' spreadin' out the clothes on the hedge. It wasn't much time for gard'nin' she had, the poor soul—an' annyhow she'd ha' been hard set to keep a flower, for she had a great old hayro of a nannie goat! If it wasn't for that same there'd be narry a story about him or her.

By some misfortinit chance one day me brave nannie broke the old rope that was spanc'lin' her, an' with an' eye for beauty that ye wouldn't suspect, over she goes to Tom's garden! She went over the hedge at the right han' corner, breakin' it well on the way; through the young pitaties, takin' a bite off them here an' there as she went, an' on through the row o' sweet peas to the cabbages. Down on them she charged, like a ginerál at the head o' a devastatin' army, an' faith she broke up

THE PEELER AND THE GOAT

their ranks quick enough, too; she was dancin' a reel on the roses when Tom kem in at the gate.

Dear good Lord! it's a wonder the sky didn't fall on his head the language he used! It was that strong it staggered the goat an' med her stan' stock-still till he caught her by the horns, an' kickin' an' buckin' an' swearin' he dragged her over the road to Kate's house.

"I'll be troublin' ye, ma'am," says he, mighty polite an' sarcastic, "to be steppin' over to have a look at the nice work yer goat's been doin' in my garden. An'," says he, "ye won't be blamin' me when I have ye up before the magistrate to have ye restrained from keepin' the onmannerly brute." An' with that he gev the old nannie a kick in the side.

"How dar' ye lay a finger on my property, ye sneak o' a peeler ye?" screamed Kate. "I'll have the law on ye, as sure as I'm stan'in' here, an' if there's anny right or justice in it ye'll be med pay for it, kickin' the innocent beast an' blasphemin' like that for the sake o' a few old posies that are no good to man or beast."

Well, one word borra'd another, till afore ye'd know where ye were she caught up the

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bucket o' dirty suds an' threw them all over him. Most o' the neighbors were stanin' roun' by that time, an' they couldn't but laugh to see Tom with the water drippin' off him an' the white suds stickin' to him, an' he splutterin' an' spittin' an' swearin' like mad. He'd ha' murdered her, I'm thinkin' on'y she slapped the door in his face an' lef' him there. It's poor comfort kickin' at a door an' cursin' with the water drippin' off ye an' the neighbors grinnin' at ye, so he went across the road, through all that was left o' the garden an' into the house, bangin' the door behind him so that ye'd hear it a mile off, an' no one set eyes on him again that night.

The next mornin' the priest got wind o' it, so down he kem to try an' make the peace atween them. Tom was out workin' away, tryin' to patch up the damage with a face that 'd sour the gooseberries, an' he was that black that his Reverence was hard set to get an answer out o' him. Sorra a word would he say but, "I'll make her pay for it," over an' over again, an' at last, "I'll have the law o' her, the old scarecrow, makin' me the laugh o' the town, with her dirty soap-suds!"

THE PEELER AND THE GOAT

"Orrah, what sort o' a fool are ye atall, man?" said Father Pat. "Don't ye know that it'll be all in the papers if ye go to law, an' the boys ye knew in the force'll be readin' it an' makin' ye the laugh o' the whole o' Ireland? Come, now, Tom, have sense," says he. "Shut yer teeth on it, an' the few that saw it'll be forgettin' it entirely in next to no time."

He saw the sense o' that quick enough, so in spite o' himself he said he'd let it rest at that. "But," says he, lettin' a big oath out o' him, "by this an' by that, if that old divil lets that mischeevous brute inta me garden again I'll put a bullet into his old carcase, an' that'll put a stop to it for good an' all."

With that Father Pat went over to Kate, an' there was no fear of him gettin' no answer there. She was as free with her words as her suds, an' faith his Reverence got the deluge o' talk. The whole story he got, an' a bit more to the bargain, an' the end o' it all was, "I'll have the law on him."

"Well, as sure as ye do," says the priest, "ye'll have to pay for the damage to his garden, an' for spoilin' his clothes, an' ye'll have to lock up the goat an' pay all the costs o' the action,

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an' sorra a bit o' satisfaction will ye get, unless, indeed," says he mighty sily, "unless ye'll be glad that Tom is gettin' the money off ye."

"Orrah, the spalpin," she yelled, "is it let him get me money? I'll not be givin' him the comfort o' it. An' sure, Father dear, mebbe ye're right, for there is no law or justice in it. The peeler is sure to have the law on his side—bad cess to him!"

So Father Pat went home, havin' put a stop to the law proceedin's annyhow, an' trustin' to time to do the rest.

That was in July, an' would ye believe it? All through the winter there wasn't a word atween them. He'd be workin' an' whistlin' in his garden an' she'd be scrubbin' an' singin' not a stone's throw away, an' they'd never as much as pass the time o' day to each other. To be sure, Tom put that "barbed wire"—the kin' with the little tacks stickin' out o' it—all along the top o' his hedge, an' tol' the neighbors in a fine, loud voice, for Kate to hear, that it was to keep "distructive beasts" out o' his garden when their owners knew no better than to let them loose; an' she tol' them that it was a wonner some people'd spend their money on

THE PEELER AND THE GOAT

rubbish when they were that mean they grudged the very dues to the priest—an' that, I can tell ye, was one for Tom, who was that close he wouldn't give a happorth till Father Pat threatened to read him off the altar, an' then he took all the good out o' it with his growlin' an' groanin', till the priest declared if it wasn't for the example he'd tell him to keep his dirty money.

Right on to the spring they were snappin' an' snarlin', an' mebbe they'd be at it yet on'y for a joke o' the boys.

I needn't be wastin' yer time tellin' ye that the row atween them was the talk o' the whole countryside, an' mebbe there wasn't a laugh 'down at the forge one night when John Finerty says, "Wouldn't it be a fine thing to make a match atween Kate an' Tom this Shrove?" Ye min' John, don't ye? the big, solemn lookin' chap with the laugh in his eye that does be drivin' the car at the hotel? There was never a bit o' divilment this side o' the Shannon that John wasn't in since he wasn't the height o' me knee, but sure there isn't one but has a soft corner in his heart for him withal. Well, the boys were all down at Dan's

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forge that night an' ye could hear the laugh they let out o' them from here to Cape Clear. "Orrah, is it takin' leave o' yer senses ye are?" says I. "Sure they won't look the same side o' the road as each other."

"Well, what'll ye bet," says he, "that I don't make the match an' have it settled by Shrove?"

"I'll bet ye what ye like," says Dan, stoppin' work at the old mare he was shoein', "for yer no saint to be workin' a mericle, nor a witch to be doin' it be a charm, an' I'm thinkin' it'd take both one an' the other to bring *them* two together."

"Wait an' see," says John, "an' I'm a Dutchman if ye don't dance at the weddin' this very Shrove." With that they all began laughin' again, an' goin' on talkin' o' other things it went clean out o' their min's till, just as they were breakin' up, John called out, "Don't forget, boys, ye're all to come to the weddin'."

The very next night John turned in at the gate an' dropped down on the bench beside Tom, who was smokin' his pipe outside the door. They talked about this an' about that till, casual like, John nodded across at Kate.

THE PEELER AND THE GOAT

"That's a dacent poor widda woman, God help her," says he.

"Aye, dacent enough," growled Tom, "if it wasn't for the divil o' a temper she has."

"But," says me hayro, "there's many a one gets sour if they can't have the one their heart's set on; it makes them bitter with the man they're hankerin' after the whole time." An' the schemer sighed, like the playboy he was.

"What are ye drivin' at atall, man?" says Tom, oneasy like, for withal he was a soft-hearted chap. "Sure ye wouldn't be insinuat-in' that that dry old chip was pinin' away?"

"Then, if I was insinuat-in' it," says me brave John, gettin' up as if he was goin', "I wouldn't be so far out be all accounts,—but, sure, I'd better be off before me tongue runs away with me."

"Aisy now! Ye've said either too much or too little, an' sorra a step ye'll go till ye've tol' me the whole o' it."

"Well," says he, hesitatin' an' still stan'in' ready to be off—"ye'll never tell or let on to anny one I tol' ye?"

"No, no," says the peeler, gettin' keener the more he'd hang back, "ye can trust me right

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enough—ye get close-mouthed enough in the force.”

“Well, it was this way,” says he, sittin’ down again; “ye remember the time ye had the little difference, an’ them few words?”

“Faith I do—sorra a fear o’ me forgettin’ that!”

“After that ‘herself’ was talkin’ to Kate, an’ says she, ‘What med ye do the like o’ that to the dacent man? Sure it was no wonner he’d be angered, losin’ the work o’ the year on his garden, an’ it as pretty as a picture.’ An’ what d’ye think?” says he, warmin’ to the work, “but she hung down her head an’ says she,—but mebbe it’s not fair o’ me to be tellin’ ”—an’ he med to get up.

“Go on, man,” says Tom, grippin’ him by the arm, afeared o’ his life he’d go, “go on! Whatever ye say ’ll be safe with me.”

“‘Well,’ she says, ‘it’s true for ye, Mary Finnerty, an’ it’s out o’ me mind entirely I was, but’—for the Lord’s sake, Tom, never let on I tol’ ye this!—‘what med me mad was that he’d be thinkin’ I let out that old goat a-purpose, an’ I that set on him an’ takin’ as much pride out o’ the posies as he did himself.’ ”

THE PEELER AND THE GOAT

"Good Lord!" says Tom, his eyes an' mouth a yard open, swallyin' the lies like a cat lappin' milk, "it's not in earnest ye are?"

"Faith I am, an' that's not half o' it. I disremember how she put it, but Mary tol' me it'd bring the tears to yer eyes to see the way the creature's frettin' over the coolness atween ye. 'I could bear it,' she says, 'if he'd even be the same as afore an' sometimes say a pleasant word to me.'"

"Well, well!" says Tom. "Who on the livin' earth'd think that o' her! If you was me, John, what d'ye think ye'd do?"

"Now, Tom," says he, "if ye value yer life don't let on to man or mortal that I said a word to ye—but if I was you I wouldn't be too hard on her. I'd just pass the time o' day pleasant like, an' throw an odd word across the road to her, an' if she's a bit short an' crotchety I'd pay no heed, knowin' the reason—an' mebbe I'd give her an odd bunch o' the posies to comfort her." An' with that the rogue got off in a hurry, afeared of his life he'd burst out laughin' in poor innercent Tom's face.

That night he got "herself" into the plot, an' the next mornin' she went past on the road an'

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stopped for a bit o' a talk over Kate's hedge. Luck was with her, for the first thing Kate said was:

"What's on that old curmudgeon over? He'd the impudence to call out to me this mornin', 'Good mornin', ma'am,' says he, 'how's this soft weather agreein' with ye?' It's soft his own head must be gettin', but as true as yer there, before I knew where I was I'd answered him."

"Well, now, I'm real glad o' that," says Mary, laughin' up her sleeve, "for it's time ye had over with the fightin' with him, an' it's hard on him, too, considerin' "—an' she stopped herself up short, as if just rememb'rin' herself.

"Consid'rin' what?" says Kate, all on edge for the rest.

"Oh, nothin' at all," says she, "don't ye be mindin'; just forget I said anything, for John 'd have me life if he thought I let it out."

"Orrah, don't ye know me long enough, Mary Finnerty, to know I'm no talker?" says she. "There isn't one that hears a story after me. I minds me own business," an' that was no lie for her either; "but sure ye may keep yer

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news," an' with that she turned to go off with herself. An' Mary was in a nice fix.

"Aisy now, Kate," says she, "an' don't be gettin' huffed with me; sure we all know ye've a still tongue in yer head,—an' I was thinkin' that mebbe ye ought to know what Tom was sayin' to 'himself' about ye last night."

"About me is it?" says she, risin' at once to the bait. "Out with it, Mary Finnerty. I'd like to know what business he has to be makin' free with my name."

"Whisht now, woman dear, sure it's nothing bad he was sayin' atall, atall, but just frettin' at the ill feelin' that had sprung up atween ye, an' wonnerin' how he could be makin' up with ye. He was sayin' that he doesn't know what kem over him to be makin' anny row atall over the few bits o' flowers the goat med away with, an', says he, 'I'd give every one that's in the place for a friendly word, I'm that fond o' her.' "

"Orrah, go on with ye, Mary," says Kate, laughin' out in her face, "ye can tell that to the marines. Sure we all know that John does be tellin' lies faster than a donkey'd trot,—not meanin' anny offence to you, ma'am."

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"There's none taken, ma'am," says Mary very stiff and perlite, an' chucklin' inside o' her at the laugh she'd be havin' on John, "but it's the gospel truth I'm tellin', an' if I may make so free, Kate, if I was you I wouldn't be too stiff in meself, for it's a good match he'd be, an' ye could give up the washin' an' have full an' plenty."

"It's a pity ye couldn't be havin' him yerself, when ye're so set on him; I'm wantin' none of him, thank ye kindly." An' with that she turned on her heel an' went back to the house, as high an' mighty as ye please.

That was near two months afore Shrove, an' every night the boys 'd be jeerin' an' laughin' down at the forge, an' askin' John "how the love birds were gettin' on," or "were the young couple cooin'," but he'd on'y tell them that the laugh'd be on them soon, an' sorra another bit o' information would he give. An' all the time Mary'd be droppin' in by way o' nothing to see Kate, an' tellin' her o' the way Tom was breakin' his heart for her, an' John 'd be tellin' Tom of an ev'nin' that Kate was pinin' away for the want o' him, an' the poor fool o' a man 'd be fretting about it an' sayin' to himself:

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"Well, then, sure I might do worse, she's a dacent hard-workin' poor body, an' it's lonesome enough at times, an' a woman's mighty handy about a house"; an' then he'd lean over the hedge an' shout, "God bless the work!" an' if she was in the humor they'd have a bit o' a talk across the road.

It was goin' on like this till a couple o' weeks afore Shrove, when one fine Sunday over kem Tom with a basket on his arm an' a bunch o' posies in his han' as big as yer head.

Kate was sittin by the door takin' the air, an' she couldn't believe her senses when she saw him walkin' in; she was, as she tol' me her own self, struck of a heap.

"Good ev'nin', ma'am," says he, lookin' mighty foolish; "I made so bold as to bring ye over a couple o' flowers an' some rhubarb that's just out, an'—" an' he stopped as if half-afear'd to go on, "an' a head o' young cabbage for the goat."

"Thank ye kindly, Tom," says she, laughin' as she took the cabbage. "Won't ye be sittin' down; it's real glad I am to see ye inside the gate again."

"Ye're not as glad as I am meself, Kate,"

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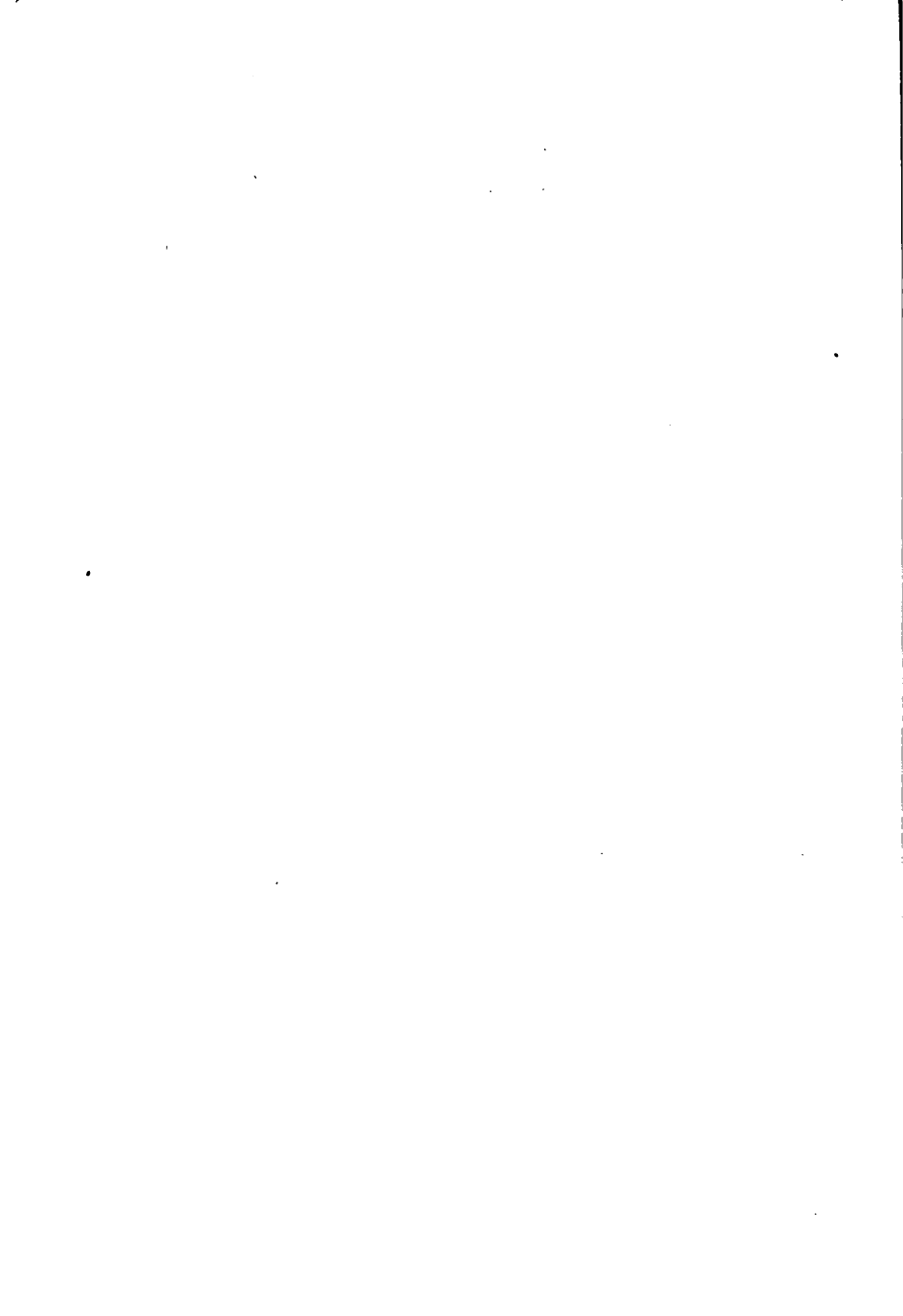
says he; "it was terrible lonesome when ye wouldn't be lookin' the same side o' the road with me. Not but I deserved it, kickin' up a row like that over a few bits o' flowers."

"Whisht now, Tom, sure it was the dirty trick I played ye, throwin' the water on ye for the sake o' that contrary ol' divil o' a goat." An' with that they both began laughin', an' afore ye'd know where ye were Tom was askin' her to marry him—"an' Kate astore," says he, "ye may bring the goat."

The next night when the boys were down at Dan's it was a fine surprise they got when John walked in with Tom, as shy as a girl, behind him.

"See here, boys," he shouted, "shut up shop an' come for a drink. Tom wants ye to drink the health o' Kate an' himself; they're to be married a Tuesday an'," says he with a wink, "Father Pat'll have the organ playin'—yes, as sure as ye're there—they'll be playin' 'The Peeler and the Goat.'"

"THAT IMP JOHNEEN"



"THAT IMP JOHNEEN"

"JOHNEEN! Johneen! Bad cess to the child, then, an' where is he atall, atall? Johneen!"

Mrs. Moriarty's shrill voice could be heard crying over all the din of the wedding preparations, but Johneen was a missing quantity. Kate Mullally, his cousin, was to be married the next day and all the connections on both sides of the house had gathered for the celebration, the more nearly related being pressed into service for the "readying up." Outside the men hung around disconsolate, listening to the scrubbing and pulling and hauling to a continual accompaniment of conversation.

"Orrah, then, an' did ye see the elegant hat that Nell Conealy's got? Sure, the Queen of Roosia never saw the like, wid yalla feathers an' puce roses stuck roun' the brim. Musha it's a show to the wurld like a light-house."

"Yerra, it's great settin' off it'll get wid the fine head o' red hair on her."

"Is it in the room ye'll be havin' the dinner, ma'am?"

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"No, then, but in the kitchen, an' we'll have the dance in the room."

"Mrs. Moriarty, ma'am, would ye be sendin' Johnneen to look for eggs?" and in an undertone, "It'll keep the little spalpeen out o' mischief."

Again the querulous voice rose. "Johnneen avic. Where are ye, astore?" this time with success, for a shock-headed youngster put his head round the jamb of the door, his wide-grinning mouth adorned with evident signs of jam and his dancing eyes full of mischief. It was not his mother's loving hand that grabbed him as he appeared. Aunt Maria pounced on him and shook him vigorously.

"Ye young blagguard ye. Is it stealin' the damson tart ye are? Ye good-for-nothing rapscallion ye. If I was yer ma I'd give ye the father an' mother of a batin', so I would."

"Leave him be, Maria. Leave him be," interposed the mother. "Sure, ye can't be expectin' sense from a bit o' a child. Here, honey, come an' tell yer ma. Sure ye wouldn't be such a bad boy as to touch the lovely tart?"

"No, I didn't either, I just put me finger in

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between the weeshy criss crosses o’ paste an’ got a taste, an’ ye’d never know there was a ha’porth wrong wid it.”

“There, now, Maria, wasn’t I tellin’ ye? Sure, ye’d think ye never had chick or child o’ yer own ye’re that contrary. There, now, alliniv, mother won’t let one lay a finger on ye,” as Johneen, sure of his mother’s sympathy, set up a lusty howl.

“Well, well, it’s a true sayin’, there’s no fool like an old fool, Jane Moriarty, the way ye let that brat o’ yours pull the wool over yer eyes! Here, stop yer howling an’ go look are there any eggs since mornin’.”

Conscious of a palpable crack in the “weeshy criss crosses o’ paste,” Johneen was only too glad to grab the egg basket and run before there were any further investigations of the damson tart.

As the door closed with a bang the fond mother began to laugh. “Sure, wisha, an’ he’s the innercent child entirely. It’s not more than a month ago that Shiela Martyn sent over to see could I give her a couple o’ eggs for Nora. The child is terrible puny and dawny this year or more an’ she does be fancyin’ an egg now an’

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then. All the hens were off layin' except that ould Cochin-chiney, an' I sent Johneen to see if there was e'er an egg atall, atall. He's awful set on Nora, an' ran down like a flash o' lightnin', but sorra a sight of him was there comin' back. We waited an' waited, an' at last I went down meself. An' would ye believe it? There was the poor child an' he down on his knees holdin' on to the ould hin an' shakin' an' shakin' her to try an' get an egg. Och, it was the comicalest sight ye ever laid eyes on."

Meanwhile the "innercent child" was streeeling down to the poultry yard, vowing vengeance on Aunt Maria for this the latest of her many misdeeds. "The ould divil, why wouldn't she be lettin' me alone? But sorra fear of her, from mornin' to night it's 'Jane Moriarty, ye'll sup sorra wid a spoon o' grief, the way ye're ruinin' that child,' or 'If he was my boy I'd soon teach him.' Faith, an' I'd like to see her, so I would. It's sorry I am that I didn't eat every bit of her ould tart, but I'll pay her out, so I will." Just then he opened the yard gate, and the first thing he saw was the big black hen, the very apple of his aunt's eye, that had won prizes at every show in the countryside.

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That same hen had brought Mrs. Mullally into bad favor with many a neighbor who had striven in vain to buy or beg a setting of its eggs. She had brought the original hen from her old home away in the north of Ireland, an important part of her dowry, and it was of a breed unknown in the south. Even her sister, Johneen's mother, had been refused the precious eggs, and the sight of the hen strutting proudly across the yard brought up another injury to the already aggrieved John. "Mean ould thing she is," he muttered. "The whole yard full of her black hins, an' sorra one would she be givin' me ma. Musha, then, bad luck to her, it's the pity o' the wurld they wouldn't all be dyin' on her, or sto—" A seraphic grin broke over his face and he began to dance round the yard and whistle with glee. "I will. Faith an' I will. As sure as me name is John Moriarty. An' O Lord, won't she go mad an' won't she be makin' the divil o' a row?" And an ecstatic burst of giggles made him roll over with joy. But a cry of "Johneen! Johneen! Hurry there, alanna. Sure yer aunt is waitin' for the eggs to make the grand custard." "I'm comin', mother," he shouted, and

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racing round, he gathered up all the eggs he could find and walked back soberly and steadily, planning to make superhuman efforts to behave and so ward off all possible suspicion.

Before nightfall the work was done, the long table in the kitchen resplendent with all the best glass and china in the parish, the beef and flitch of bacon were hanging ready to pop into the dutch oven in the morning, the pies and tarts and stewed fruits, the grandest soda bread and griddle cakes were on the pantry shelves, and out in the barn was a big barrel of porter to drink the bride's health. Peace and quiet fell on the farm, the neighbors who had come in to help had gone, but Johnneen and his mother, being far from home, were staying for the night.

Morning came, the bustle began again, and you should have seen Kate when dressed in all her "grandeur" mounting the car to drive in state to the church. Her pale-gray dress and white gloves, her wonderful hat all decked with pink roses and white feathers, and, final touch of style, the brightest tan shoes that ever dazzled the eye of man. Johnneen, brushed, combed and shiney with washing, looked, to use his aunt's supercilious

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words, “as if butther wouldn’t melt in his mouth, moy-ah.” Even his mother was a wee bit anxious at the prolonged attack of virtue and nervously whispered, “What’s on ye, agradh? Have ye a toothache or annythin’?” And seemed quite unconvinced by his subdued disclaimer. When the wedding breakfast was over, the speeches made, the songs sung, the priest gone home and the dancing and jollification well under way, Johnneen was not missed when he slipped out.

“We’ve a long way to go, Maria,” says Mrs. Moriarty, “so Johnneen had better be putting the horse to—where is the boy? Johnneen! Johnneen!” At once his thin little treble answered, “I’m gettin’ the cart, ma, but there’s that many at the gate I’m thinkin’ ye’d better come round to the yard.”

The proud mother beamed. “Will ye be lis’nin’ to that, now, Maria? Sure, it’s the sense of a man he has, the child. How well he remimbered the way we had to be goin’, an’ did ye hear him askin’ me to get roun’ to the yard, he’s that careful he wouldn’t be showin’ off like another an’ come tryin’ to drive in atween all them carts.”

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"Sure, he has sense enough," was the grudging response, "but it's seldom he uses it. I must say he was bettther this time than I ever saw him. Mebbe ye'll make somethin' out iv him one o' these days." So with mutual good will the sisters parted, and Mrs. Moriarty, climbing up on the seat in front of the newly painted red and blue cart, never noticed a basket in the straw at the back. They were almost home when Johnneen interrupted his mother's flow of genial gossip. "Ma, d'ye know what's behind ye?" "Where, avic?" "In the basket in the back." Knowing he meant her to have a great surprise, and suspecting a present of some of the superabundant tarts, she wandered far and wondered: "Would it be a kitten, now? Or mebbe a fine York cabbage?" Johnneen shook his head vigorously and cried out in glee, "Ye'd never guess in a month o' Sundays. It's Aunt Maria's ould black hen!"

If he wanted to cause a sensation he certainly succeeded. The reins dropped from his mother's nerveless fingers, her mouth opened, her eyes grew round in astonishment. Never for one instant did she dream that her precious

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boy had stolen the prize fowl, and that Maria should have grown so suddenly and recklessly generous was beyond belief.

“Orrah, get on wid ye,” she gasped at last. “Sure, aren’t ye the rogueen to go foolin’ yer ma,” and she gave him a playful dig in the ribs.

“Sorra a foolin’ in it, then,” he answered. “It’s there behind ye and divil a lie I’m tellin’ ye.”

Convinced against her judgment, Mrs. Moriarty broke out in praise of Maria’s generosity. “Though, faith, the poor ould hin is near the end o’ its days, an’ she’s well stocked up with chickens of the breed. See what ye get for bein’ a good boy, Johnneen. Yer Aunt would niver be thinkin’ o’ givin’ ye the hin on’y ye were that good yisterday. I hope ye didn’t forgit yer manners, but said thank ye kindly, Aunt Maria, and told her ye’d be after takin’ the best o’ care o’ the hin, did ye, avic?” she repeated anxiously.

Johnneen was a born diplomat. With a well-assumed air of injured innocence he answered, “An’ then what d’ye be thinkin’ I did? Is it makin’ a face at her I would be or what? Did I say ‘Thank ye?’ ” he muttered, half to him-

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self. "An' what under heaven would I be after sayin'?"

It was too much for his tender-hearted mother. Slipping the reins into her right hand, she put her arm round the innocent lamb and drew him toward her. "There, now, agradh," she murmured soothingly, "sure of course an' ye did. I wouldn't be doubtin' ye for the wurrl'd atall, atall." Then she went on musingly, "Orrah, what could have come over Maria to do the like of that? I niver knew her to give man or mortal even a settin' of the eggs, to be sayin' nothin' of the ould hin herself. She was that proud of all the prizes an' medals an' ribbons it did be gettin' at the industrial exhibitions, an' will ye ever forgit the trick that Danny MacNamara played on her gettin' her to send it in to the hortycultural?" and she went off into a fit of good-humored chuckles.

Father John Mulcahy, the old parish priest of Carrigamuck, was off the next day to a conference, and who should he meet there but his friend Father Brian McGrath of Knocknatubber, Mrs. Mullaly's parish. In the course of their chat Father Brian began telling about

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the wedding and the good match that Kate had made. “But,” says he, “I declare to ye, John, that old mother of hers takes neither pride nor joy out of it she is that distracted over the loss of her prize hen. Ye’d be thinking that feathered biped had come straight down from heaven, the fuss she used to be making over it, and faith the very day of the wedding it disappeared, and neither sight nor light, tale nor tidings can she get of it. I’m telling her some poor tramp or another just lifted it when every one was in at the dance, and she may as well make the best of it, for by this time it’s boiled and eaten, and pretty tough eating it’d be making, I’m thinking!”

“That’s like enough. Those boyos are always around if they get the word of a spree, and sure it’d be easy enough to get off with anything they could lay hands on.” And so the subject dropped, but as Father John was jogging home behind his old black horse in the cool of the evening he suddenly drew rein and gave a long, low whistle, for there in full view in Mrs. Moriarty’s yard was Maria Mullally’s well-known old black hen.

“Now the blessing of God on us all!” says

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he to himself. "But how in the name of the Lord did that happen? I think I'll just drop in by way of nothing and have a chat with Jane Moriarty." It was no unusual road for the horse, for Father John often turned in as he went by to pass the time o' day, and there was ever a warm welcome for him. Now, it was Johnneen that first caught sight of the priest's car and ran helterskelter to tell his mother. "Father John is coming, ma. Come quick to meet him." With a hasty smooth down to her hair and apron she got to the door in time to hear the hearty "God save all here" as he stepped over the threshold. "God save ye kindly, Father," she answered; "sure it's a sight for sore eyes to see ye. Come on into the room. An' what'll ye be takin'?"

"God bless ye, woman dear, sure I'm wanting nothing at this time o' day, and I just getting back from the conference. If ye have a drop of fresh buttermilk, though, I might be persuaded, and sure the kitchen is the best room in the house, to my mind," and he flopped down into the corner of the settle.

It was no wonder he liked the look of the room with its clean-flagged floor and chairs

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and tables scrubbed till they were whiter than the silver sand that washed away the stains of every day, the bright turf fire glowed on the great open hearth, the stiff white curtains tied back with red ribbons at the little windows showing the still redder masses of geraniums in the trim green boxes, and through the open door he could look across the fertile valley of the Blackwater and the thickly wooded country to where the Tipperary mountains gleamed gold and purple against the evening sky.

“Yes,” he mused, as he sipped the great glass of cold fresh buttermilk with the little scraps of golden butter floating around on top, “Yes, it’s a nice place you have, sorra a nicer in the parish, and it’s a great credit to you the way you’ve managed since himself went, God rest him; but sure Johnneen will soon be man enough to help ye. Where is the rogue? I heard him calling ye as I drove in, but didn’t get a glimpse of himself atall.”

“Sure it’s out gettin’ a feed for the horse he is, yer Reverence, an’ it’s true for ye, he’s a good boy and a great help to me intirely, though it’s meself that says it! There’s many a one that does be sayin’ this an’ that about

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him, but faith it'd be as well for them to be lettin' my boy alone an' look nearer home."

Father John saw there was some offending neighbor in question, and being a peace-loving man, thought he would discreetly turn the conversation and gradually work round to the black hen.

"And what about the wedding, ma'am? I hear it was a great affair entirely, and that Kate Mullally did very well for herself."

"Now an' she did, Father, purty well. He's a decent, steady boy an' has a hun'ed acres or more of the best land in Tipperary, an' it well stocked. They do be sayin' that he's took up wid them Gaelic Leaguers an' spends a lot of his time wid them, an' some do be thinkin' that he's a fool for his pains, an' it's no good atall to be speakin' Irish. Sure mebbe it's not, I don't rightly know meself, but annyhow, it's better to be took up wid booklarnin' than wid drink, an' I must say that for them Leaguers they are as steady, self-respectin' lads as we have in the country. I was list'nin' to one o' them talkin' over at the fair, an' though I don't hold by newfangled notions, what he said had sense enough. But sure that's neither here nor

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there, an' yer Reverence knows more about it than I could be tellin' ye, but there's this, that if Kate has done well for herself, faith he has done bettther, for she's the best girl in twelve parishes, though it's I says it as shouldn't, seein's she's my own niece. Maria is greatly tuk up with the match and that delighted there is no standin' her. Faith, I'm thinkin' it must ha' gone to her head like the drink, for would ye believe it, she gev her ould prize hen to Johneen?"

Father John put down the glass of butter-milk and stared at her as though he could not believe his ears and a look of sudden comprehension came into his eyes. It was not for nothing he had baptized Johneen, seen him grow up under his eyes, suffered many things while teaching him to serve Mass, and heard the weary tale of the schoolmaster; he knew the little imp inside out and could make a pretty shrewd guess as to the inner history of the "gift." Still, there was no good enlightening the mother, so he only nodded his amazement and murmured, "Well, well, who'd have thought it?" which served as an answer to his

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own thoughts just as well as to Mrs. Moriarty's spoken words.

Again the good woman took up the theme of the wedding and wandered on, giving all particulars of the party, the dance and the more solid part, the settlements.

"Ned Ryan had of course the farm an' the stock, but Kate didn't go to him empty-handed. Maria did the decent thing by her and gev the girl a hun'ed pounds down, as sure as ye're there, an' two feather beds, and a dozen o' sheets an' four pair o' fine fleecy blankets an' as gran' clothes as ye'd ask to lay eyes on, an' there isn't many a girl that is as well set off, I can tell ye, though sure it's not the likes o' you I need be tellin' an' you the finest match-maker in the countryside," she added.

"Ah, none of your blarney, Jane. What sort of a fist would I be makin' of it, a poor, stupid old priest like meself. Sure," he added with a chuckle, "if I was any good at all I'd be trying my hand on getting a man for yourself, a good-looking widow woman with a scamp of a lad like Johnen crying out for a man's hand over him. Not indeed," he added hastily as he saw a cloud gather on the mother's

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face, "that any one could say much real harm of the lad, a merry, mischievous young shaver, and that's the worst. It's hard to lift my old bones out of this warm corner, but I must be off. Don't come out to the yard with me; it's a bit wet under foot, and Johnneen will do the honors."

And so it came to pass that the "thief of the world" was caught unprotected by the only one of whom he stood in awe. Not knowing his dark deed was discovered, he stood his ground, rubbing old Sally's nose and pulling her ears, but a guilty conscience made him anxious enough for Father John to climb up on the car and go in peace. There was no such luck in store, and one glance at the solemn face of the priest made him realize that by some mysterious power all was discovered. He had not to wait long for absolute certainty.

"Well, John. What's this about your aunt giving you that hen?" There was a horrible pause while the sobered lad searched wildly for some way out of it, but none came. "I'm thinking, Johnnie, you'd better walk down to the gate with me and we'll talk it over." The conscience-stricken sinner grabbed the bridle and

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began to lead Sally towards the road; he felt dreadfully small and alone and had no former experience to guide him as to how Father John would take this the most heinous offense of his life. It was an immense relief when he felt the fatherly hand on his shoulder, and looking up, caught the ghost of an amused twinkle in the faded old blue eyes. "Oh, Johneen, Johnneen, what are you coming to? What made you ever do such a thing? Didn't ye know that stealing is a great sin, and a terrible, mean, low thing into the bargain?"

That was too much for the manly wee soul, and he broke out: "Mebbe it was a sin; sure I suppose it was, but it wasn't mean or low ayther. She'd no right to be always naggin' and scoldin' at me an' I not doin' a thing to her. An' I didn't want her dirty ould hen; she might kape it an' go to the devil for all I care. Why wouldn't she give me ma a settin' o' the eggs an' she her own sister? It's she that's mean and low," he muttered, repeating the offensive words.

It was well he kept his eyes down half awe-stricken at his own temerity in "speakin' up" to the priest or Father John's reputation

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would have been gone forever; not all his efforts could keep down the broad smile, I almost called it a grin, that crept over his face. But he was undetected and his voice sounded very impressive and solemn as he went on. "Hush, now, Johneen! Little boys must not speak like that of their aunts. Maybe Mrs. Mullally had some good reason for not wanting to give the eggs, and anyhow they were her own and she had the right over them. (God forgive me," he interjected to himself, "excusing the mean old skinflint.) I am quite sure it was not without reason she was finding fault with you, but however it is, my boy, you must give back the hen."

Johneen looked up aghast, undisguised horror depicted on every feature. "Lord save us, Father," he gasped, "it'd be as much as me life is worth! Sure it's murder me entirely she would if she ever got wind o' it."

Father John had once heard Mrs. Mullally "layin' out a tinker," as she said herself, and he knew that her nephew's fears were well founded. "M-m-m," he mused. "Wait now till I see what we can do." There was something very comforting to the soul of the sinner

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in that friendly "we." "I've got it. You just slip off in the morning, Johneen, and catch the old hen, put it in a basket, bring it over to me and I'll see to it that yer aunt never dreams that it was yourself that took it. But Johnnie boy, you had better make a clean breast of it to your mother; there is no good telling lies, man, and ye'll have to give her some explanation when the hen vanishes." Poor Johneen, he was finding the way of the transgressor hard, but there was no other way out of it, and anything was better than the facing of Aunt Maria, so very humbly he thanked the old priest and walked soberly back to confess to his mother. It was not a very formidable ordeal, after all, for she, good woman, was divided with pity for the penitent, indignation against her sister, who indirectly was the cause of his fall, and a covert admiration for his smartness at getting the better of her. That most reprehensible pride was of course hidden from the culprit, but in her own mind she was saying, "Faith, it's as cute as a pet fox he is, the thief o' the wurrl'd. And sorra a lie he told me either. Wasn't it meself that med up me mind in a hop, skip and a jump that it was a

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present he was after gettin'? Sure it beats Banagher."

Next morning Johnneen brought over the hen, carefully tied up in a basket, for Father Mulcahy to see to the restitution. He, good man, had been considerably exercised in his mind as to the best way to manage. He had pledged his word to the sinner that he would never be discovered and he was perfectly well aware that should he boldly drive up to Mulally's door and deliver the lost property, Aunt Maria, being no fool, would promptly fix on the culprit. There was no one he could trust to deliver it, so he saw no way except to get over after dark and let the bird out in the yard in secret. It was rather an embarrassing situation for an aged and highly respected parish priest, but the boy soul which had never died in him rather rejoiced at the adventure. "'Pon my word," he said to himself with a chuckle, "I'm thinking it'll be a bit o' fun. I feel like the days I used to be stealing the apples from Johnneen's grandfather, God rest his soul, and forgive me my sins."

Still, he did not much care to have the hen visible in his yard, so the unfortunate bird was

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left in the basket in a corner of the barn until such time as it could be safely delivered. Meantime a sick call came, and knowing Margaret's kindly interest in his concerns (he wouldn't for all the world, even to himself, call it curiosity), he warned her under all the pains and penalties at his command, and a good many that weren't, to stay away from the barn and let no man cross its threshold. Trusting to her awe of the ministry, he went off pretty comfortable in his mind. Not an hour after his departure who should come along jiggitty-jog on his old gray mare but Father Brian McGrath.

"Is his Reverence in?" he shouted as he came into the yard and surprised Margaret trying to look through a crack in the barn door. Starting at the sudden sound, she jumped round and gasped. "Well, now," asked Father Brian with pardonable curiosity, "what on the living earth were you trying to see in the barn, and why don't you open the door and go in?"

"Oh, Father dear," she stammered, still breathless with the shock of his sudden appearance, "I don't rightly know what I was lookin'

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for, and I'd be afeared o' me life to go in. Father John put the fear o' God in me heart afore he went out, and I don't know what 'd be happenin' if anny one was to open the door.”

Father Brian, more mystified than ever, determined that he would have a quiet exploration when Margaret's back was turned. In the meanwhile he tethered the horse to the gate post and went into the house, chatting genially as was his wont. Among the other items of news he imparted to old Margaret was the sudden disappearance of the famous hen. “Well, well, glory be,” she exclaimed. “She must be fairly daft wid the loss, but I must say it was a just judgment. It's neither right nor natural to be that set on a brute beast as Maria Mul-lally was set on that hen. Ye'd think it was her own flesh and blood to hear her, and many an' many a time I've warned her; it was only me juty.” Father Brian smiled to himself. “Juties” of that sort were seldom neglected by Margaret, who seemed to think her long-standing position as general commander of Father John's household conferred a sort of deputy spiritual authority and justified her in being

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monitor-in-chief for the parish. Indeed, she privately considered Father Mulcahy as "too easy goin' entirely, the crature."

Having reached the little study, Father Brian strolled in and sat down to wait for his friend while Margaret retired to her own domain to see what she could prepare for the unexpected but ever welcome guest. No sooner had she vanished from sight and the sound of clattering pots and pans gave assurance of her safe disposal for some time than Father Brian crept stealthily out and opened the barn door. For a minute he stood bewildered; nothing whatever met his eyes except the usual manger and stall; then he saw a very innocent and ordinary market basket standing in one corner. It was the only possible mystery, so stepping quickly over, he raised the lid. Maria Mullally's black hen, half mad with her long confinement, flew out before his astonished eyes! With an exclamation he started to try and catch her, tumbling over buckets, brooms, pitchforks and the rest in his haste till the din brought Margaret out in a rush. Neither spoke a word, but round and round the yard they chased, till finally, with

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a desperate grab, the triumphant housekeeper captured the fugitive. Then with a look of profound grief she turned to the priest. "Did ye ever hear the like o' that? Ochone, but I never thought I'd see the day. Sure it's doting he must be, the crature. Sure, bad cess t'ye," she muttered from the depths of her grief. "God forgive me for sayin' the like to the priest, but why did ye go an' open the basket for all the wurld to see?"

Father Brian stood amazed. Never had he seen Margaret so deeply moved, and the cause was completely hidden from his eyes. Could the racing round the yard after the frantic hen have been too much for the old woman and upset her mind or what? He watched her put the offender into the basket, shut down the lid and turn away moaning and groaning to herself. Still turning the matter over in his mind, he went back to the room. Of course it was as plain as day a simple case of restitution, and Father John was keeping the hen, literally in the dark, until he could get it back. Suddenly a light broke on his puzzled brain, and slapping his knee, he gave a great shout of laughter—Margaret thought that Father John had

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himself stolen the precious bird. It was too good a joke; he'd try it himself, and when his host got back would take the air of grieved surprise and tender anxiety about his mental condition.

When Father John came driving home and brought the cart round to the yard he was surprised to see the old gray mare tethered to the gate of the kitchen garden and no sign of her rider. Usually Father Brian would come out to greet him when he heard the wheels on the gravelled path, but now there was a deadly silence, not even a word from Margaret, though he could hear her busily at work in the kitchen. Mike, the boy, he knew was absent at this hour, gone home for his supper, so rather puzzled at the silence, he unharnessed and took the horse into the stable. A glance showed him the basket apparently undisturbed, and contentedly he went into the study, shouting as he passed the kitchen, "Home again, Margaret. The sooner you get the dinner the better, an' I see Father McGrath is inside."

An almost incoherent mumble was the response, and he could not believe his ears that

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they had caught, "He is so, bad luck to him." Surely no bad humor would cause Margaret, a veritable pillar of the church, to use such words of a priest, but discretion is the better part of valor, so he did not make any investigation.

In the study, instead of the usual hearty greeting, Father Brian responded to his welcome with a subdued, "Oh, I'm all right, but," with a very keen glance, "how are you yourself?"

"I'm well, thanks be to God. There is a good deal of sickness in the parish, but I am well able for the work in spite of my old age. You seem out of sorts yourself, Brian. What's on ye?"

A heavy sigh greeted the inquiry, and then that humbug asked, "Does your head be troubling you any, John? You don't think there is any one talking to you or anything?"

"For the love of heaven, what are ye driving at, man?" asked the bewildered host. "Is it mad you think I am, or is it crazy entirely ye are yourself? Sorra a soul there is to be talking to me but Margaret there, and it's often enough I'm wishing there wasn't that same."

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“Are you sure, John, that you don’t feel a longing to be lifting a thing when you see it, or the like o’ that?”

Father Mulcahy looked covertly at the sideboard. He knew his friend was an abstemious man, but perhaps, coming in hot and tired, he had taken a glass of whiskey, and not being used to it so early in the day, it had gone to his head. It was the only possible explanation of which he could think. But no, there was neither glass nor bottle visible and the key hung as usual on a peg beside the pipe-rack near the chimney-piece. Meanwhile he thought he would steal a side glance at the evidently distraught man; he did, and caught a grin, which vanished like a flash. Without a word he walked over, caught the culprit by the two shoulders, gave him a shake and demanded an explanation of his “play-acting.”

“Och, John agradh! Isn’t it the sin o’ the world that I could never keep a straight face on me? But sure, man alive, if you could have seen yourself sneaking a look at the sideboard to see was it drunk I was, ye’d have laughed yourself. But with all your innocent looks, my boyo, I want to know how you come to have

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Mrs. Mullally's fine hen in your stable, hidden as snug as you please, and every policeman in the countryside on the lookout for it?"

"An' what about yourself, Brian? How did you come to be ransacking my stable when I gave strict injunctions to Margaret not to let man or mortal inside the door? Wait till I get my tongue on her."

"Yerrah, ye may let the poor woman alone; she's down in the kitchen breaking her heart over your fall from grace and cursing me for having let the hen out of the basket. Sure ye missed it," and he went off again into a roar of laughter. "Had you been ten minutes earlier you'd have found herself and myself flying round the yard as spry as two-year-olds after that blessed fowl, and it giving us the go-by every second. At last she made a grab at it, caught it by the tail and sat down with a bump that shook the house and church like a young earthquake. I declare to you, John," he went on, warming to the story, "I went right over to make sure there wasn't a fresh crack in that old ramshackle belfry of yours, and it's a miracle the shake it got didn't set the bells a-ringing! But jokes apart, man, how are you

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going to present the missing treasure over at Mullally's?"

With rather a sheepish smile, Father Mulcahy told his plan of riding over in the shade of the evening and just creeping in at the back and putting the wanderer back where it belonged. "I'll do it this very night, Brian, and we can be that far together."

Accordingly at eight o'clock the two priests jogged off together on their staid old horses, laughing like a pair of school boys at the adventure. "When we get there," says Father Brian, "if there is a light in the kitchen I'll go up to the door and have a chat with herself and that will keep her from wandering round. If the house is dark I'll just wait for you at the bend of the road and whistle if there is any one coming."

"Faith," answered Father John with a chuckle, "it's no wonder the 'pitaties are black' when two old priests like yourself and meself go off like a couple o' schoolboys dropping chickens into people's yards after nightfall, though in the old days we were more apt to be taking them out than putting them in, eh, Brian?"

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Along the broad, dusty road they went, greeting the passers by, who touched their hats and shouted, “God speed ye,” as they went, till at last they came to the boundary hedge of Mrs. Mullally’s clover field. They slackened pace and grew silent as they came nearer and nearer the corner where they could see the house. It was in pitch darkness. Not a sound could be heard, and Father Brian whispered encouragingly, “Here, slip off, John, and give the bridle to me. I’ll lead Sally round the corner and you go over the grass, keeping close to the hedge, and no one will see a stim of you.” It was good advice, and like a field mouse the old man crept silently round the corner of the house and into the yard. Nothing stirred, and he stood a moment to reconnoiter. To the left was the low stone wall and wide gate leading into the boreen, behind him the house and garden gate by which he had come in, at the left the kitchen door, which he saw with relief was tight shut, and there facing him the stable, cow house and barn, where he knew the hen roost waited his burden. “I’d better take her out o’ the basket,” he muttered to himself. “Maybe that shrewd old screw up

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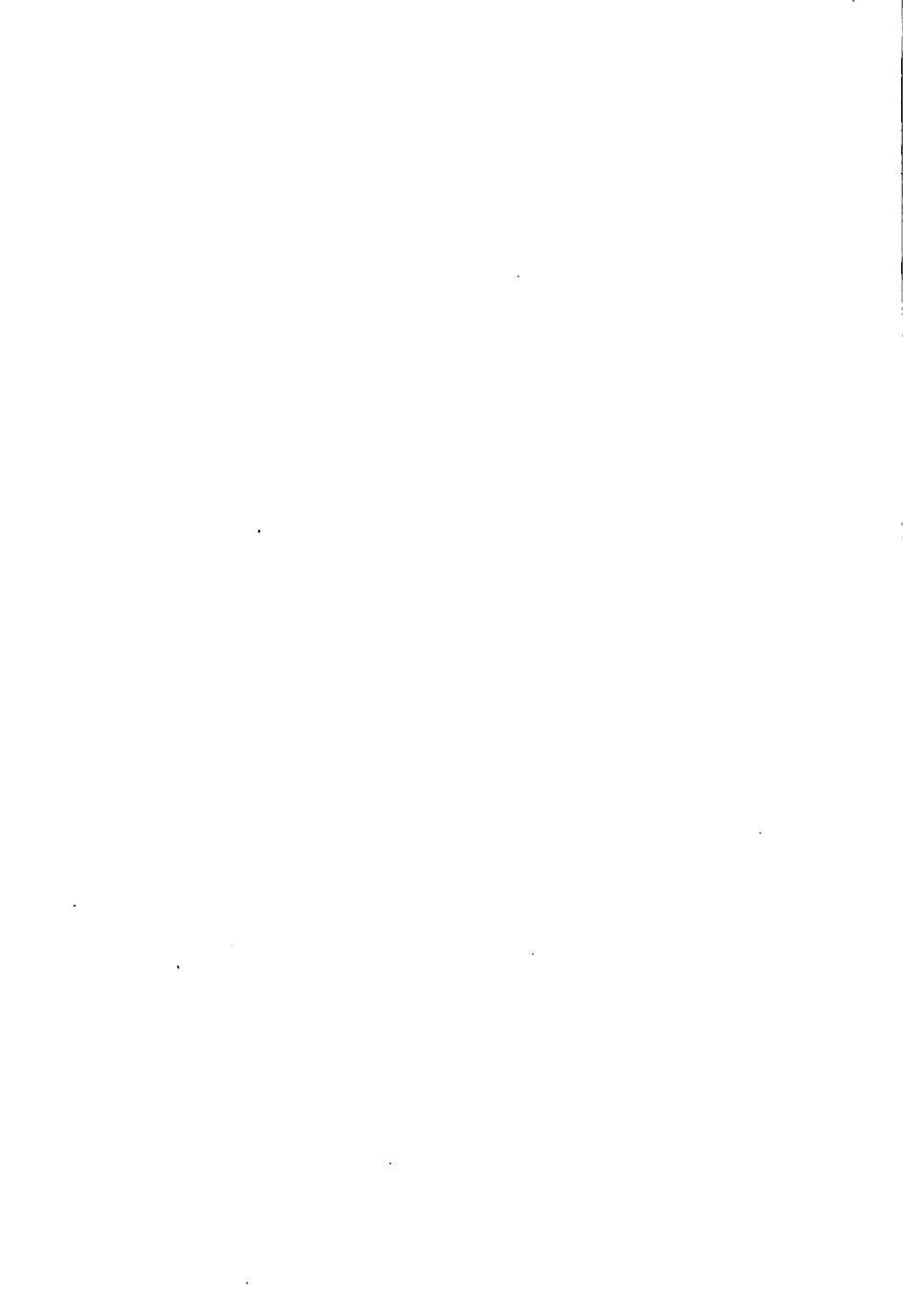
there might recognize it, though faith it looks to me like every other basket that ever came out o' Mahoney's below." Stealthily he crept across the yard and gently, very gently pushed open the barn door. A couple of sleepy clucks greeted him. "Bad cess to ye," he muttered. "If ye make such a row ye'll have herself down thinking some more of her hens are going." Raising the basket lid, he lifted out the black hen, who thus rudely disturbed cackled as though she were being murdered. Desperately he threw her on the ground, making a bolt for the boreen gate, for he heard the kitchen door open and saw the flicker of a lantern. Never in the forty-six years he had been a priest had he run as he did then, hearing Aunt Maria like fate relentlessly pursuing. On down the boreen he went, and all might have been well had not a treacherous bramble lain in his way; his foot caught, and desperately but fruitlessly grabbing at the cold night air, he fell flat in the ditch.

"Now 'where will I go with my sheep's head'?" he sighed to himself as Mrs. Mullally's voice broke on his ear.

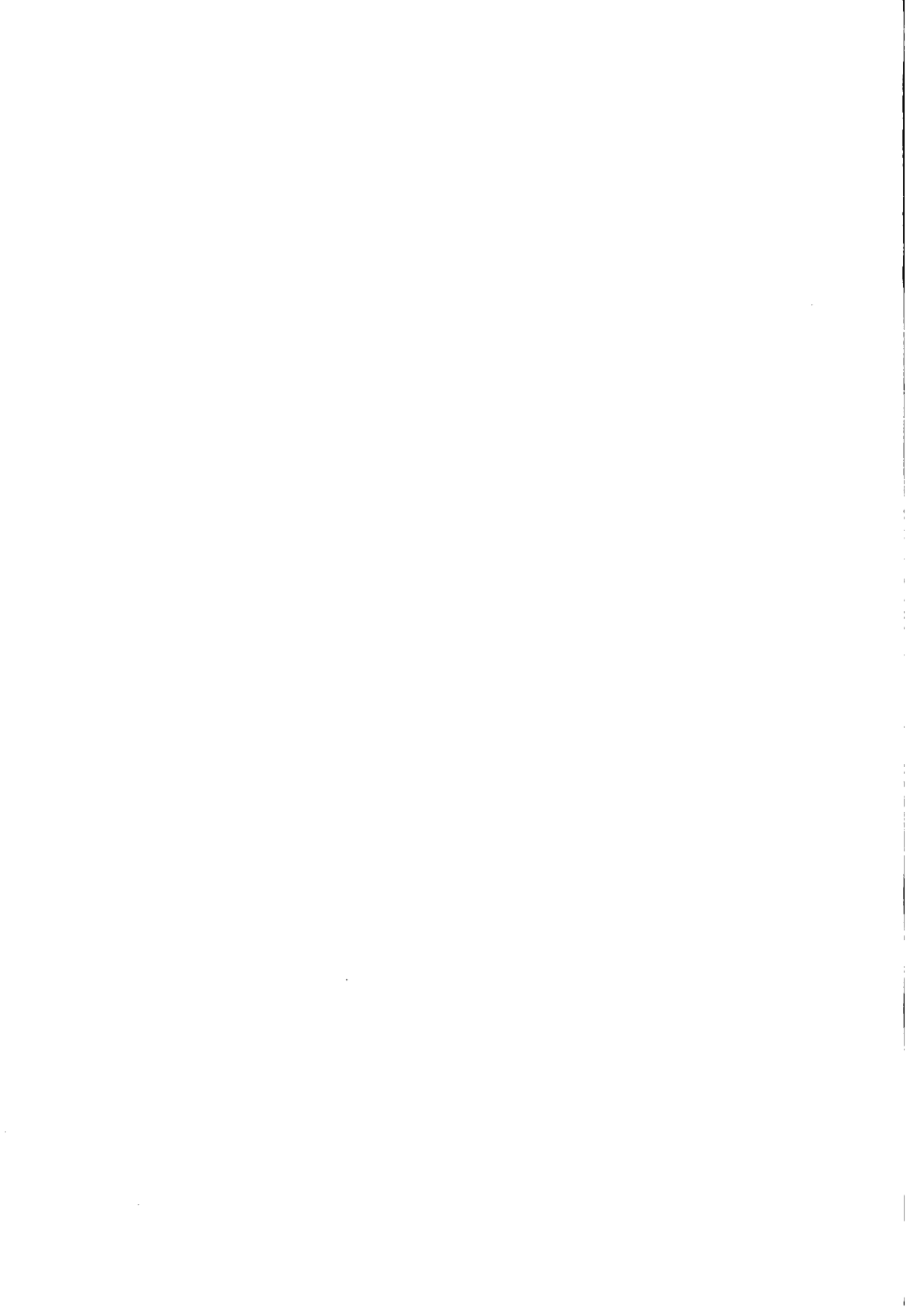
"I've got ye now, ye dirty, low, thieving

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blagguard ye," she began. "Ye'll rue the day ye ever laid eyes on me beautiful hen, me hayro. I'll have the law on ye, ye filthy son of a tinker ye!"—the words died on her lips, for the rays of the lantern fell on the face of the prostrate, panting man! It dropped unnoticed from her nerveless fingers and fell in darkness to her feet, as in an awestricken whisper she gasped, "Good Lord Almighty, I'm ruined entirely. It's Father John!"



IN THE SETTING SUN



IN THE SETTING SUN

"HER troubles are all over now, God rest her."

The words broke in on me as I sat idly dreaming, listening to the droning of the insects, the distant lowing of the cattle and the faint twittering of the drowsy birds. It was on the Newcastle Road at the hour before the sun is quite gone and all the air is breathlessly still. If you know Galway, know it not as a "one day" excursionist who drives from the Crossbones to the College, on to Salthill and back by the Grattan Road and the Cladach, as if that were knowing it; but if you have strayed and lingered in its quaint old streets, wandered by the Cladach and talked with the people, drinking in the old world charm till you dreaded leaving the "Citie," then you must have found your way along this road and loitered, as I did, that summer evening.

I looked up as I heard the words and saw my old friend, Nick Burke, coming down the hill with a woman dressed in the usual short red petticoat, check apron, frilled cap and blue

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cloak. They were his parting words I had caught as she turned to go up the boreen. He came on toward me.

"God save you, asthor."

"God save you kindly, Nick. Who is it that's dead?"

"Margaret Flahertie, the crature; we are after berryin' her up in the new cimetary, God rest her."

"Margaret Flahertie? I don't think I knew her. Did she live in the town?"

"She was wife to Shan Conroy. Sure ye must have heard how he got his death, though it was afore ye kem west."

I shook my head, for I did not even remember having heard the name before, and Nick seeing my ignorance, sat down on the loose stone wall beside me to tell the story. "It was this way, asthoreen. D'ye see that house beyant?"

I glanced over the road and saw a two-story cottage, which I had often noticed before, standing so oddly in the middle of a big field, the flat green unbroken by a path or tree, or, stranger still in Galway, a single stone.

"Well, that's Andra Flahertie's farm, an'

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in that very house she was born. She was their only child and they thought the verra sun shone out o' her. She had a fine eddication too, over at the Presintation, an' the nuns, God bless them, thought as much o' her! But sure nothing 'd do her but to fall in love with Shan, not that livin' soul had a word against him; he was a fine, steady, hardworkin' lad an' that han'-some it 'd do yer heart good to be lookin' at him. But old Andra was as proud as the devil, with respects t'ye, an' he thought it 'd be demeanin' the fam'ly to let his girl be marryin' a Cladach man. So there were words atween the child an' himself, an' the poor mother, God help her, darn't say a word, for Andra was a hard, dark man. The priest himself kem over and tried to put reason int' him an' the Prior from the West kem to speak a word for Shan, but sure they might ha' spared their breath; sorra a word 'd Andra say, but that it was a curse she'd be takin' from him the day she'd be marryin' Shan Conroy. Orrah, that was the hard saying from a man to his own child, an' she such a good girleen as Margaret. But marry him she would, an' God nor man, no, nor the priest himself 'd get Andra to the wed-

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ding, an' when she was leavin' the house she went to him and tried to coax a soft word out o' him, but it was a blow she got, an' he up an' says, "The curse o' God on ye, Margaret Flahertie, an' me heavy curse on the man that took ye from me," says he, an' with that he walked out an' away up the road there, turnin' his back on the chapel beyant an' the young girl cryin' her heart out on her mother's breast.

"Ah, well, they were married, annyhow, an' had as neat a little house as ye could lay eyes on over at Fair Hill with a garden that was a picture with the posies all roun' the potato patch an' the rows o' cabbages. An' when he wasn't down at the locks—for it was a diver he was—he'd be out with the fishin' an' in the evenings he'd be settlin' up the garden, an' they as happy as a pair o' childer. It was nearly a year gone, an' they expectin' the child, when he was called out to go down in the canal there near the bridge. There were weeds or somethin' stopping the sluice, an' they were for having him clear them away. God rest him, it was the sorrowful day for him; his comrade was new to the work, an' when Shan, the poor lad, was down in the bottom, what did the

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omadhaun do but let go of the contrivance for haulin' him up, and there was the decent boy an' no way o' gettin' him out, Mary have pity on us! Well, bad news travels quick, an' before they found him, an' they dragging for him with boat hooks, Margaret was down to the towpath, calling him and keening that ye'd hear her here, an' only the priest had run up from the West an' kep his hand on her she'd have like to throw herself in after him. Och, it was the pitiful sight, asthoreen, an' when they got him out the doctor was there down from the college, an' he said there was life in him, so he had the priest, glory be to God, but he never gev sign o' knowing her, an' she kissin' him an' cryin' over him. They did what they could, pumpin' air into him an' all, but sure it was sorra a ha'porth o' good, an' he was dead afore they got him over to the bridge.

"Well, that night her trouble kem on her, an' the child was as fine a boy as ye'd ask to see, the verra spit o' Shan; but she never knew him, for from that day out she was dazed like an' took no note o' anny one—an' to-day we burried her, God rest her."

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"And what about Andrew? Did he not repent?"

"Repent, is it? Faith an' he did, an' much good it did him. He took herself and the child home there beyant, but she never took note o' him; an' if the mother or himself took their eyes off her a minnit, it's down to the water she'd be, callin' 'Shan, Shan,' that pitiful it'd bring tears from a stone, an' old Andra, divil mind him, God forgimme for sayin' it, has never held up his head since."

"It's a sad story, Nick. God comfort them and all that are in sorrow."

"'Deed an' it is, agradh; but sure it's the weary world we live in; it's well we have a bright heaven afore us, God an' His Blessed Mother be praised."

THE NEW INKYBATOR

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THE little white cottage stood at the very corner of Murphy's farm with its back turned square on the clover field and facing out to a wee patch of garden that ran down to the road. It was a pretty little spot with its trim green shutters, freshly thatched roof, roses, ivy and honeysuckle climbing over the rough white-washed walls and the tall ash shading it from the hot June sun. Yet in spite of all it sheltered a very discontented woman just then. Poor Mary Ryan was thoroughly depressed, and no wonder. It's hard to be thrown out of work with a strained back when you are still active, specially if you have been a hard-working, energetic farm girl, up from early dawn, putting your hand to everything, from cooking the breakfast, milking the cows, weeding the potatoes, binding the corn, making the hay and doing the washing, to nursing the babies and being the general friend of the family.

"Here I am," she grumbled to herself as she pulled the white ashes over the glowing "seed"

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of the turf fire to keep it in till tea time, "here I am, comfortable enough, thanks be to God, but with sorra a soul to pass the time o' day with. Sure God be with the days I'd be over beyant with them all," and she sighed heavily.

She looked round the little kitchen, its walls toned into lovely creamy browns by the turf smoke, its tiny white curtains tied back from the windows, the small table scoured to a snowy cleanliness, the high settle painted a dark red standing at the hearth stone, the big black kettle hanging on the crane, the dresser with its rows of blue and white dishes, the comfortable, unpolished chairs with their seats of plaited rushes a soft delicate green, the gorgeous altar at the end, resplendent with blue star-bestrewn paper, white lace and brass candlesticks, while the tall, glaringly colored vases held great tightly packed bunches of roses, white daisies, forget-me-nots and St. Joseph lilies and the big blue and white statue of Our Lady smiling down on it all, flanked on one side with a glass holy water font and on the other by a picture of St. Patrick in green cope and mitre placidly trampling on a particularly venomous-looking snake.

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"It was the decent thing for John Murphy to gimme the place, it was so, an' sure the Lord'll increase his store for it, but if there was only as much as a chicken to be messin' it up, sure it'd be more homelike. Mrs. Greer does be comin' in with her 'How I wish all the cottages were like yours, Mary; I'm sure it's a lesson to them all'—it's easy for her talkin' with her gran' house up at the glebe an' her two servants and neither chick nor child to be desthroyin' it on her."

She went on talking to herself as she pulled a chair from the corner, dragged it over to the half door and sat down with her knitting hoping that some passer-by might stop for a chat and break the monotony of the silent, workless day.

"A weary on it for an ould stocking," she sighed as she drew the wool from her apron pocket; "it's fine work entirely for me, an' I that used to be able to do the work o' two. Now there's nary a thing to be doin' but sit here knit, knit, all the day long and listen to meself clackin' away to meself, but sure it's well I can have a sensible woman to be listenin' to me, that same is a comfort," and she laughed

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grimly. "Sure there be the childer comin' home from school; mebbe Ned'll come in for a word wid his Nanie, the child," and she limped over to the tall press in the corner to get ready the bit of apple cake that her pet boy loved. "There now, that'll warm his little heart, the rogueen, an' though it's meself that says it, there isn't one beyant that can make the like now," and she sprinkled the sugar on with a liberal hand as she heard the gate swing and a merry shout from Ned Murphy, aged six years, who considered himself quite a grown man, in spite of the red petticoat that still enveloped his active little legs and the white "pinny" that wounded his very soul. His only comfort was a grand new cap "with a spec," which his mother had brought from town the last fair day. "None o' the girls have the like o' that," he had announced with satisfaction to Mary on his last visit, made for the express purpose of exhibiting his splendor. He ran in at the door, knocking over the chair, bumping into the bench on which stood the water pails, making a great big splash on the spotless floor, never stopping till he threw his books in one corner, his cap in the other and

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climbed up to hug his beloved "Nanie," who stood in speechless delight at the destruction of her orderly kitchen.

"There, now, then," she exclaimed as she extricated herself from the hot and sticky embrace, "aren't ye the bad boy to be desthroyin' me kitchen on me, an' for the love o' God will ye be lookin' at me cap strings wid the blackberries off yer han's? Sure ye're that bad ye'll have to eat the whole o' that apple cakie to be punishing you, so you will," and she presented the big chunk of pastry to Ned, who proceeded to sit down on the straw hassock and gobble it up while the soft, overflowing apple oozed out in delicious mushiness on his chin, fingers and "pinny."

"Gollies, Nanie," he mumbled with his mouth full, "why don't ye teach the new girl to be makin' cakie? Sure she isn't a ha'porth o' good, and sorra a thing she does but tell me to get out o' the kitchen, and not be clutterin' things up, an' whatever I ask her she does be makin' a fool o' me an' sayin' 'a big bow-wow wid a smoothin' iron stole me heart away,' or 'the odherin' touched wid the odherin'-airy.' What does she be meanin' be

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that?" and he raised his big gray eyes with an injured look to Mary, who sat above him beaming all over her weatherbeaten face.

"Sure it'd be hard tellin', agradh. Mebbe she doesn't know what a fine big sensible maneen she does be talkin' to, and is foolin' herself that ye're only a babby."

"H-m, h-m," mused the maneen as he munched on steadily, "mebbe it would be that same, but I'll be showing her. Why don't ye be comin' up to the house any more, Nanie? It's a powerful long time since ye were up, and I heard me da sayin' he wondered what was on ye?"

"An' for why would I be going up, avic? Aren't the whole o' them working hard, an' sure it's only in the way I'd be. Many a time when I did be working meself I was glad when the neighbors would get off with themselves, though its welcome enough they'd be, but sure when ye're watchin' the bread in the oven and washin' a heap o' clothes ye haven't the heart to be gosserin'." But Ned's mind had wandered, and she found she was again talking to herself when he broke in.

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"Nanie, for why do they be sayin' the top o' the minister's head is gould?"

"God bless ye, child, what put the like o' that in yer head?"

"Dick Connelly did be telling me ma that his head is gould, an' they have to be slingin' him up be the heels an' leavin' him there an' he kickin' an' roarin' like mad." This was such startling news that Mary could only stare at the small gossip in blank amazement as he went on. "Dick said they called him in an' that he was so bad wid the rheumatics that he couldn't catch houl't o' him an' they had the two girls and 'herself' and him an' the boy and the lot o' them caught him be the head an' the heels and strung him up, and me ma said she never heard tell o' the like. Is it because he's a minister, Nanie, that he does be havin' a gould head? Is Father Noonan's head gould or must ye be a Proddystan?"

"Faith, an' how could I be tellin' ye, alliniv? It must be some disease that's on the crature. I wonder is it that that does have Mrs. Greer so fussy and queer? Sure ye wouldn't blem her if she has all that trouble with himself." It was a case of speak of an angel, for hearing

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the gate again open, Mary glanced out of the window and saw the minister's wife come in.

Having very few of the poorer people of her own denomination, Mrs. Greer worked off her superfluous energies and organizing abilities on the Catholics of the parish, and as she never interfered in their religion and backed her other interfering with substantial presents of flannel, tea, tobacco, snuff, firing, eggs, etc., no one openly resented her advice and questionings. Since the accident which had crippled Mary Ryan she had been a constant visitor and had induced the active woman to take to knitting, though a more vigorous occupation would have certainly been more congenial and probably more successful. But the taste of her beneficiaries was the very last thought to enter into Mrs. Greer's self-satisfied mind. "My dear," she would impress on her helpers when "teaching" them the "proper way to deal with the poor," "these kind of people do not really know what is best for them. They are so thriftless and careless and seem to have no real appreciation of the finer things of life." And then she would go on to quote some particularly flagrant example,

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such as Mrs. Delany, who had positively refused to transplant her cabbages to the side of the house and turn the front into grass on such a futile plea as the want of proper draining at the side patch and lack of time to see after the necessary work, "Yet, would you believe me?—that woman has only eight children, and really little Mary is quite old enough to help her mother; she must be *at least* nine years old!" Mrs. Greer being childless, of course knew the very best methods of bringing up children, and having never done any more strenuous gardening than picking flowers, she was an unanswerable authority on the most intensive and scientific cottage agriculture.

Now as she entered Mary Ryan's home and glanced round, her all-seeing eye fell on the crumbs of apple cake scattered on the floor, the splashed water at the door, the messed and torn school books and lastly on Ned Murphy's dirty little face, from which the friendly grin was rapidly disappearing under her very evident disapprobation.

"Really, Mary," she began at once, "you are ruining that child. Surely you must know that rich pastry such as apple cake is most unsuit-

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able for a little boy. Even if it was a piece of plain, wholesome bread and butter, this is not the time for it. Eating between meals is a very bad habit and absolutely ruinous to a child's digestion."

"Wisha, then, ma'am, sorra a bit o' harm it could do the child and he hungry after his lessons," broke in Mary, "and wait till ye hear the gran' way he can say his spellin' an' his two times; sure it's a fine scholar he's gettin' an' he's growin' that fast it's atin' all the day he ought to be."

Nothing short of an attack on her beloved Ned could have induced Mary to so far forget herself as to "speak up" to the minister's wife, and had a thunderbolt fallen at her feet Mrs. Greer could not have been more surprised.

"Really, Mary," she replied frostily, "you are showing Edward a very poor example of respect to those who are placed over you, and you must allow me to impress on you that as you are an unmarried woman your judgment in the matter of rearing children is hardly to be relied on." That Mary had done most of Ned's rearing so far, to say nothing of his six brothers and sisters, was so obviously be-

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side the question that she did not venture to bring it forward, but furtively giving his sticky little face a kiss, bundled him out of the door on his way home. In the meantime her visitor had condescended to sit down in the big arm-chair by the window and take up the knitting left down when Ned arrived.

"This stitch is too tight, Mary," she corrected. "You see you are getting the stocking quite puckered. All this must come out for I should say at least forty rows. Really, I cannot understand how a woman of your time of life can be so careless about your work. Though indeed I must say you do keep your house and garden almost perfect. I wish you would call in at Mrs. Bannon's and give her a little advice about her garden. She has planted absolutely nothing but potatoes, cabbages, beans and hollyhocks, and when I spoke to her about it she was quite impertinent."

Mary smiled softly to herself as she remembered Mrs. Bannon's version of the encounter, but determined to answer as diplomatically as she could. "Then what would you be after suggestin' to her, ma'am?" she asked.

"Well, I offered to send her down some trail-

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ing roses to plant on the walls if she would move the potatoes and other vegetables to the side and plant a nice flowering hedge to hide them from sight, and in front of the hedge she could put a row of pansies and other garden flowers. I would gladly supply the plants."

"Now, that was very kind of you, ma'am, an' I'm sure Mrs. Bannon was real grateful to you, but ye know she has a power o' childer an' they do be eatin' every bit she can grow, an' more too if they could get it, the cratures, an' between the washin' an' doin' for them she hasn't the time to be givin' the care to the like o' them posies that you'd be sendin', an' she'd be that put out if they died on her that she doesn't like to be undertakin' them. An' ye see, ma'am, mebbe she'd be takin' yer advice next year, for it 'd kill the pitaties and cabbages entirely on her if she was to be transplantin' them now."

Mrs. Greer smiled amiably and passed on to her next beneficial scheme. "Do you know, Mary," she queried, "'the Association for the Beautification and Improvement of Cottage Homes' is about to form a branch in our parish? And it seems to me that you should

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be the first to enroll your name. Not that your little home requires much change, but for example! There will be a quarterly distribution of prizes for the best kept cottages, the neatest and most decorative gardens and the home which shows the greatest improvement in a short time. Of course it will mean a great deal of extra responsibility and work thrown on my shoulders, but I cannot consider myself when there is a question of the good of the parish."

She paused for comment, which Mary promptly supplied by a pitying cluck of her tongue and "Indeed, ye needn't be tellin' me that, ma'am," while inwardly she wondered what the people of Gurtnaskeagh would think about this new benefit that was willy nilly to be showered on their devoted heads. While she let her thoughts wander Mrs. Greer had gone on.

"Of course a board of examiners or inspectors or investigators must be appointed, who will make surprise visits to the enrolled members and see that every part of the cottage is neat and orderly and to teach the most scientific and hygienic methods of housekeeping.

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Jane Byrne, the priest's housekeeper, is to be on the committee, and I expect Miss Dolan, the colonel's youngest daughter, to join, but I know, of course, the work of the whole thing will really fall on me." She glanced at her watch and jumped hastily to her feet exclaiming at the lateness of the hour. "And I have at least four other places to call before afternoon tea."

Mary stood at the door watching her quick, decided little walk down the path, the jerk with which she opened the gate and the snap with which it was closed, then shaking her head she went back to her chair and took up the despised knitting. Suddenly she laughed out loud, exclaiming, "And Jane Byrne will be on the committee! Faith, it'll be as good as a play to hear her after the meetin's. Sure it's little she does be thinkin' o' them new-fangled societies. I'm thinkin' there will be the divil to pay when the 'inspectin' begins. Glory be to God, what do the like o' them know about keepin' a man an' ten or twelve childer in two rooms an' a loft with the heart eaten out o' ye wonderin' where the next bit is comin' from and the rent hangin' over ye like a nightmare?"

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It suddenly struck her that Ned's messing was still spoiling the spotlessness of her own home and started to tidy up, her mind going back to the loneliness and emptiness of it all. "If I only had something alive. A cat's not a ha'porth o' company; it goes off with itself just when ye're wantin' it, and annyhow, when it's there, sorra a thing does it do but sit ferninst the fire and blink at ye. Now if there was a clutch o' chickens it 'd be different. Ye'd never be done wid them, feedin' them and shoooin' them out o' the door and watching that they didn't scratch up the posies on ye, and havin' the heart scalded out o' ye like a houseful o' childer. Bridget Murphy'd gimme a clutch and welcome, but sure I wouldn't be askin' them when John gev me the very roof over me head." It was late that night when she thought of a way out of the difficulty and went to bed a happy woman.

Early in the morning she made her way up to the farm, and as she sat in the dairy door chatting with Bridget, who was busy making the butter for the market next day, she dexterously led the conversation round to the subject of "them new-fangled hatchers ye've got."

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"Is it the inkybaters ye mean?" asked her hostess. "Sure they're grand things intirely. All ye've got to do is to keep them at the right heat and the chickens are hatched out a hundred or more at a time and sorra a bit o' trouble to anny one. Ye mind the way me heart used to be broken with that ould leghorn, tryin' to keep her on the eggs? Well, now I just pop them into the machine an' that's the end o' it."

"Glory be to God, isn't it a wonderful contraption?" murmured Mary.

"Faith, now, an' I don't see the wonder of it atall. All the wonder I do be seein' is that some one didn't think of it long ago. Sure it stan's to reason if ye keep the egg warm the chick 'll hatch out. That's the nature of it!" and Mrs. Murphy gave the butter a vigorous dig with the skimmer.

"True for ye, ma'am," assented the visitor, "an' sure I was near forgettin' to ask ye—did ye hear o' the new society the minister's wife is inventin'? 'The society for the beautification and decoration of our cottage homes!' Moy-ah! An' who d'ye think is on the committee—Jane Byrne!"

Mrs. Murphy stopped the buttermaking to

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stare. "Faith an' it's no wonder the pitaties are black. ' Jane Byrne! An' Mary Ryan, will you be telling me what the divil is she goin' on committees for?"

"How could I be tellin' ye, woman dear? Onless it's for the fun o' it. Sure there never was the like o' Jane for havin' a little quiet jibe to herself, and I'm thinkin' that it's just to be listenin' to the like o' that slip o' a Dolan girl and the minister's wife plannin' and argufyin' about the way we should be livin' and how to be bringin' up childer. Sure God love ye, ma'am, it'll be the finest o' fun for Jane, an' they won't be expectin' her to say a word, as she isn't one o' the quality. All she'll have to do is to hold her tongue an' enjoy herself. But the sport o' it all will begin when they take to inspectin' and examin'in' the cottages."

"Och go 'long with ye, Mary. They wouldn't do the like o' that."

"Aye, would they. Sure that's a part o' the programme. "To make surprise visits and see that every part o' the cottage is neat an' clean," them was her very words. An' I sat listenin' and picterin' to meself how Nell Sullivan or Sarah Connelly would take it when the exam-

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iners kem around with 'Now let me see your loft, Helen. Oh, feather beds are most on-sanitary. Ye must get rid of it at wanst,' or 'Dear me, Sarah, you must remove that pig-stye at least two hundred yards from your house, or better still, don't keep pigs; they are very onsghtly.'” Mary's mimicry set the two women laughing till a sudden thought made Bridget serious. “Look here, Mary, did ye hear tell o' the gould plate in the minister's head?”

“Sure, Ned was tellin' me something about it, but I thought it was just the child's makin' up. You don't tell me it's the truth it is?”

“Faith an' it is. Dick Connelly was tellin' me. It seems he got a hurt to his skull an' they had to be takin' a bit out o' it, an' they put a weeshy gould plate over the hole to be keepin' in the brains, not that they'd be burstin' out, I'm thinkin'; and whatever way it is they do be havin' to sling him up be the heels every now and again an' keep him hanging with his head down for ages an' ages. An' d'ye know now? I was wonderin' was it the strain o' that that does be havin' Mrs. Greer that queer and onaisy like so that she can't be mindin' her own business an' lettin' the like o' us alone?”

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"Orrah, an' I wouldn't be surprised, the crature. Sure it must be terrible hard on her to be havin' him like that an' it 'd be enough to make her queer herself, God help her."

"I was thinkin' it over ever since Dick was tellin' me, and wonderin' oughtn't we to be tellin' them down in the village, an' then we could be humorin' the poor woman a bit. Sure we needn't do what she says, but just agree with the poor soul and let on that we'll take her suggestions as soon as we can. It 'd be only a charity, I'm thinkin', and wouldn't do a ha'porth o' harm to any one."

"Right ye are, Mrs. Murphy, ma'am," answered Mary emphatically, as she pulled herself slowly to her feet and made ready to go, but the good-hearted hostess stopped her.

"Wait now till I get ye a few fresh eggs. It's a pity ye haven't a place to keep a couple o' hens down there. But sure they'd be only a nuisance to you and ye can get all the eggs ye want here an' welcome. Ye know that, don't ye?"

"Sure it's too good both you and John have been to me, Bridget Murphy. God'll reward ye for it."

And so it came to pass that Mary Ryan went

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home to her little cottage with a dozen eggs wrapped up in a corner of her apron and her heart full of high hopes.

As soon as she got in she closed over the door, and getting a small basket, lined it softly and warmly with a bit of old flannel, and laying the eggs gently down, set the whole beside the fire and shut the lid. "I wonder will that be hot enough? Well, it'll have to do until I get the tea, and then faith I'll go to me bed an' take them along with me. I'm thinkin' that'll be the only way to keep a even heat, and Bridget says that's the whole secret." So after a hasty tea the basket of eggs was put in the middle of the bed, and with a contented sigh Mary Ryan cuddled down beside them.

Next morning she rose, made the fire and got her breakfast as quickly as possible and crept hastily back to bed, determined to keep the eggs warm at any cost. She lay there contentedly dreaming of the day when the fluffy little yellow chicks would come peeking out and chuckling as she thought of Mrs. Murphy's surprise. "I'll never tell her where I got them," she mused, "for she'd never be done laughing at me. Sure she'd gimme the chick-

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ens an' welcome, I know, but she'd be thinkin' me a fool to be littering up the place with them just for the company when I get all the eggs I want. She wouldn't understand, her that has her man and the houseful of childer."

The possibility of awkward questions from her occasional visitors had not occurred to her mind, so a dismayed pause came before she cried "Come in" to a brisk knock at her door a few days after. The latch was raised and Jane Byrnes' ugly, shrewd, kindly face looked in. Jane was one of the characters of Gurtnaskeagh, and everywhere she went her entrance was enthusiastically greeted, specially by the children, who ran to this "ould maid," as she called herself, as naturally as the bees fly to honey. Her small blue eyes, cocked nose and exaggeratedly long upper lip had an irresistably comic effect, her wrinkled old hands had a tender touch that soothed the most fractious baby, her dry comments on any kind of affectation or pretence were a joy to the grown-ups, while her staid respectability commended her to "the quality."

"God save ye, Mary Ryan," she exclaimed, "what's on ye to be in bed this fine day? Sure,

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it's not sick ye are." And she bent anxiously over her friend, instinctively smoothing the crumpled pillows as deftly as the best trained nurse.

"No, then, Jane, I'm not exactly sick, but I didn't feel like gettin' up, and sure divil a ha'porth o' difference it makes to man or beast whether I'm up or down."

"Orrah go 'long with ye. Never say die till ye're dead, Mary! There was never a one in the world that there isn't some use for, but sorra a fear o' ye findin' it in yer bed. It's a grand soft warm day out, thanks be to God, so just get up and sit out in the garden and ye won't know yerself before the pigs whistle."

"Mebbe I will after a bit, Jane, but get a chair there and sit down where I can see you." Jane complied with a grin.

"I don't blame ye, woman, for wanting to look at me. There isn't a handsomer than me-self in the parish, and it's them same good looks that are taking me into the highest society in the county, on a committee, no less! Now what d'ye think o' that?"

"Stale news, ma'am, stale news. The min-

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ister's wife was afore you, so I heard all about it."

"Well, now, to think o' that? The minister's wife to get ahead o' the priest's housekeeper. That's the way the children o' this world get ahead o' the children o' light." Jane could not read, but her marvelous memory gave her unending tags of quotations that lent an unexpected literary quality to her conversation. "Did ye ever hear tell o' Dickens, Mary? He wrote a great books, an' in one o' them he tells about a woman who used to spend her time making red flannel petticoats for the little naked savages at the equator. I never see Mrs. Greer but that same woman comes into my head. Flannel in a place that's hot as hell and posies for the children that haven't a bit to put in their poor little mouths or a decent stitch to their backs is about equal."

"Have ye been to a meeting yet?"

"Sure isn't that where I'm coming from? Ye didn't think I'd put on me black silk dress, me best bonnet and me lace dolman to call on you, Mary Ryan? Mebbe ye expected me to bring me visiting cards and drive in me carriage, did ye?"

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"Well, to tell you the truth, I was wonderin' what had ye all done out."

"'Gran' and sticky out like Sunday'? Well, it was to make my first appearance in society, and sorra another thing. Och, Mary, a committee is a great thing entirely! I was ushered in, as polite as ye please, by the English girl the minister has, and she with a lace apron and a cap with streamers, and there in the study was Mrs. Greer, the youngest girl of old Colonel Dolan, and the two Miss Peabodys over from Drumbloch. Musha, they're the queer old pair settin' up to be the real quality, and I remember ould Peter Peabody, their father, when he was a tailor over by Dundrum and glad enough to get a job of mending the ould master's clothes that he got made in Dublin. Miss Dolan is the only one o' them that could tell ye about their gran'father, and signs of it, she was the only one that shook hands with me, or seemed to know I was there. I don't rightly know what they want to have me on it for atall, atall. I suppose they are afeared that some one 'd say there was proselytizing if there was nary a Catholic on it, and they took me be reason of Father Luke. They waited and

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waited for Mrs. Harrison and Miss Kate Henderson, but sure the two were off with the hunt and sorra a fear o' them breaking their hearts about the beautification of Gurnaskeagh. For beautiful ye're bound to be, Mary, me dear, and it'll be my pleasant duty to come around from time to time and look under yer bed to see if ye swept it out, and poke behind the dresser for fear ye have a bit o' dust, and to measure off with a ruler the distance yer pigsty is from the house, and strip the childer to make sure ye gev them a bath with carbolic soap, the same as ye wash the dogs with, judgin' by the smell. Then I'm to mark ye in a little book like childer at school, and mebbe if ye're real good and give entire satisfaction ye'll get a pot o' geraniums or a pair o' lace curtains, cut down from a long pair that the quality have no more use of, or if ye're great entirely mebbe five shillings! God be with the times when people were let alone and could mind their own business in their own way and not have the heart put across them with microbes and the like!" In the absorbing interest of the conversation Mary Ryan forgot her rôle of a disgruntled, half-sick invalid and

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sat up in bed while Jane watched her with unconcealed amusement.

"Sure it's a queer sick woman you are, Mary Ryan. There isn't a ha'porth on you but laziness. Here, get out o' that," and she grabbed at the clothes, but Mary was too quick and held them tight.

"You're a nice one, Jane Byrne, to be talking of letting people mind their own business. Don't you think I'm ould enough to know when it's time for me to get up? I'm telling you I'll get up when I want, and divil a foot before that." Her narrow escape made her really angry, and Jane was dumbfounded and abjectly apologetic.

"Sure I was only joking, avourneen. Would ye like me to get your dinner for you and to ready the place up a bit? Sure how d'ye know but some of the inspectors will be down on you before you know where ye are, and I wouldn't like ye to start off with a bad mark in yer little book."

"No, then, I won't let you do a stroke, Jane, and you dressed up in all your grandeur. Sure I'll be getting up soon and it will give me something to be foosthering over."

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"Well, if that's so, and there is nothing I can do for you, I'd better be off. I must see after that new girl I've got up at the presbytery. She's a fine, sauncy, decent girl that comes of a good stock, but she doesn't know a ha'porth about the house or cooking. She was edjicated over at the Presintation, and is a fine hand at the pianny and can read as well as Father John himself, but I'm thinking that it 'd suit her better to be able to boil a potato without having the outside in a mush and the heart as hard as a bullet. But sure the Lord save us, I'm behind the times, and an edjication is a great thing. I'm glad enough to sit down in the evenings after the work is done and take a bit o' me mending and have her read out to me. In the ould days Father Luke's mother, God rest her, used to read by the fire at night, and it's many a grand story I heard, about Becky Sharp, and Handy Andy, and the Colleen bawn, the crature, and poor little Oliver Twist, and Pickwick, and Harry Lorrequer, and all, and in the morning the master would smoke his pipe by the kitchen fire and read the paper. He was a great play-boy and a fine fool he'd be making of me sometimes telling

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me of the train wrecks, and fires, and horrible murders and the Lord knows what, and I standing with my mouth open like a fool swallowing down the lies as fast as he could be making them up. Ah, well, God rest them both, you don't often see their like nowadays; they were the real ould stock." Turning quickly away, she passed her wrinkled old hand across her eyes and went to the door, turning at the threshold for a last word. "Good-by, and God prosper you, Mary. Get up before the sun goes down and get a taste of the fresh air; it will put the life in you," and she was gone.

The departure of her visitor left Mary free to face the difficulty that had arisen—how was she going to account for her unusual attachment to bed? She had always been noted as a specially early bird and she knew right well that this sudden change could not hope to pass unnoticed. "If I say I have the rheumatics," she mused, "the life'll be pestered out o' me with all the cures they'll be givin' me; an' if I let on to be having some outlandish disease, Mrs. Greer'll be havin' the doctor in on me afore I'd know where I was. Faith, an' it's a hard job

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to take up playactin' at my time o' life." Twenty-one days of semi-invalidism stretched their dreary length before her imagination, and she groaned in spirit. The way of deception seemed almost unbearably hard. "Of course I needn't stay with them the whole time. The ould hen herself doesn't do that," and she chuckled, "but the warmth must be kep' up. Mebbe I could hotten a stone in the ashes an' put it in the bed with them now an' again' an' that'd keep the life in them."

She got out of bed, covering the nest hastily and began to dress, first putting a bit of brick in the fire to redden for her foster children. She had succeeded in settling the heating to her satisfaction and was just getting "a bite o' dinner" when the gate opened, and to her horror she saw Mrs. Greer coming up the path with a bundle in her hand, which to Mary's accustomed eyes looked like wool and needles, and she knew it meant a long seance teaching her some new stitch.

"Glory be to God. What'll I do at all, at all? The brick'll be stone cold before I can get shut o' her, and will be chillin' the creatures instead o' keepin' up the heat." There was no

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time to do anything, for the clear, cold voice of the minister's wife could already be heard at the door.

"I just thought I would drop in to see you, Mary. I have a new stitch I thought I would teach you, as I have an hour or so to spare." The unwilling recipient of her benevolence screwed up the best smile she could muster, and drawing the easy chair to the window, made her guest welcome, listening vacantly to the unceasing flow of conversation and instruction as her thoughts ran on the fast cooling heater.

"You just put the wool over your third finger like this and allow it to run easily but not too freely, see! Then twist it twice round the needle, not too tight, and take the stitch. I'll do a bit and you watch me closely." There was a moment of silence, then, "We had our first committee meeting yesterday. Quite a success. To-day I have called on almost all the villagers, and they are quite enthusiastic. Even Mrs. Brennen, who was so unreasonable before, seemed willing to join our campaign. I always knew the people only wanted to have their finer feelings appealed to and they would

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be really interested in the beautifying of our country homes. Did I explain the rules to you? No? Well all *you* have got to do is to keep your cottage just as you do," with a beaming smile of approbation. "It is such a relief to see a floor that is not all dirty with the dogs and chickens and children running in and out. You are very sensible not to keep any live things; they create such disorder and interfere with the garden."

Mary's mind turned guiltily to her hidden eggs and the little brood she hoped to hatch out in her original "inkybator." "Would the woman never go?" she thought desperately, and suddenly she summoned all her courage: "Mrs. Greer, ma'am, I'm not feelin' too well the day, and I'd be askin' you to excuse me, but I must lie down a while." Her visitor positively gasped. Could this really be the polite and invariably amiable Mary Ryan, who so rudely interrupted and almost as much as told her, the minister's wife, to go? It was incredible, unless indeed the woman was really sick. She looked a little flushed.

"Why, what ever is the matter, Mary? Are you feverish? Let me feel your pulse. Yes,

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it is beating much too fast. Let me help you to undress. I'll turn down the clothes and get your bed ready."

She moved toward the little alcove the far side of the hearth where the bed stood, but Mary darted before her, almost pushing her out of the way, and sat defiantly on the edge of the bed. Mrs. Greer stood irresolute; never in all her life had she been treated in such a cavalier fashion. She would shake the dust of this inhospitable and ungrateful woman from her feet. But surely she must be delirious. It would be unchristian to leave her alone. She drew nearer, almost timidly laying her hand on Mary's shoulder.

"Very well, I won't settle the bed if it worries you, but isn't there something I could do for you? I don't like to leave you like this. I'll get one of the neighbors to sit with you while I go for the doctor." Mary could have cried. How was she to get rid of them all and heat up her eggs in peace? She must try a little diplomacy.

"Beggin' your pardon, ma'am, I'd rather be left alone. There isn't a ha'porth on me except a bit o' headache, an' mebbe the bit o' tripe I

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had for me dinner didn't agree with me. If ye'd just let me lie down in the quiet with the door shut for a bit, I'm thinkin' I'd get to sleep an' be right in no time."

Very reluctantly the visitor agreed and took herself off, promising to come in early in the morning to see how she was. No sooner was the door shut after her than Mary grabbed the cold brick and pulling out the flannel-wrapped basket, brought it over to the fire and laid it as close as she dared to the glowing turf while she sat down on the "creepy" to think the matter out.

"I've put me foot in it rightly now. Every day she'll be in on me, an' if I'm in bed keepin' the heat in the eggs she'll be draggin' the doctor in afore I know where I am. But be the hokey, I'll have them chickens, in spite o' the devil an' all!"

Every day the difficulties increased, and Mary Ryan's "quare sickness" became the talk of the countryside. Mrs. Greer, who in spite of all her eccentricities had a kind heart, was really distressed. She finally determined to call at the presbytery and consult Jane Byrne, in whose judgment every one had confidence.

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Jane listened in silence to all the strange symptoms.

"An' ye say she won't see the doctor?"

"No. If I even hint at such a thing she gets positively wild with excitement. It is very strange. Do you think her mind could be affected?" Jane gave a dry little chuckle.

"Sorra a fear. It'd be a good job if there was many a mind gone like Mary's. I'll step down and have a look at her, ma'am. Mebbe I could get at the heart of it."

"I wish you would, Jane. I am really grieved about her; her whole nature seems changed. She used to be such an open, genial woman, always so gentle and amenable, and now she is almost morose, as if she had something to hide. She barely answers when I speak to her and seems to want to be alone."

When Mrs. Greer had left Jane sat down to think it over. It was close on three weeks now since she had seen Mary. She was in bed then, but there didn't seem to be much wrong, and though she had heard a good deal of gossip, as she said herself, "she was never one to be botherin' with talk an' paid no heed." Her maxim was, "Put

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no pass on nobody and nobody'll put no pass on you," a motto to which she adhered with unswerving fidelity. "I'd better put on me bonnet," she said to herself, "and slip over to her. It'll be the queer sickness entirely that I can't get out o' Mary." When she reached the cottage she found the door shut, and on knocking thought she heard a little confusion before Mary called out, "Come in." She opened the door and saw the patient in bed with an old bed jacket covering what seemed to be a large amount of clothing.

"God save you, Mary," exclaimed her visitor. "Sure it's only this morning I heard ye were sick. What's on ye atall?" The patient hesitated for a moment. "Well, I don't rightly know, Jane. It's just a queer feeling all over me. A kind of a shiverin' when I have to be talkin', an' a reelin' in me head." Jane laughed as she took a chair beside her friend.

"Och, now, an' ye needn't be hintin' at me to get off with meself, for I'm not goin'. It's a queer time o' day for you an' me to be havin' any secrets from each other, Mary Ryan, an'

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yer goin' to tell me truth before I go out o' this."

There was a long pause, during which the patient never opened her mouth, but lay flat on her back gazing up at the brown rafters overhead while Jane's placid face began to look a little anxious.

Could Mary's mind be going? She was used to plenty of work and companionship all her life, and maybe the sudden change to loneliness and comparative idleness was telling on her? The kind old friend was really worried and fretted.

"Well, then, I won't be bothering you, asthore," she said, patting the rough hand that lay outside the clothes. "I'll just be telling you the news and you needn't say a word. The beautification of the country is goin' on like a house afire. Mrs. Greer kem down on ould F'inerty the other day and gev him the length and breadth of her tongue. He has a grand new brown tarrier an' didn't it have a litter o' pups the other day. Ye'd think it was a family o' Christians he's that taken up with them, an' sure ye wouldn't blame him, for they'll be putting the bit in his mouth for the winter, the

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crature! Well, what did her ladyship do but come in and find the whole litter tucked up in his bed aside the fire, an' nothin' 'd do her but to catch houl't o' the ould patchwork quilt an' throw the whole lot on the floor! Mike was that flabbergasted he stood stock still, gapin' at her with his mouth open while she began. 'What filthy habits,' says she. 'I wonder you have not more sense o' fitness than to be keepin' dirty brutes like that on the bed in which you yourself will be sleepin. It's most *on*-sanitary,' she says. Be this time himself had got his tongue, and faith she got as good as she gev. He began gatherin' up the cratures an' lookin' them over to see if they'd any bones broke, and it was the mercy o' God there wasn't, for I wouldn't put it past him to have given her a blow, he was that tearin' mad. There he stud with the four pups gathered up in his arms, an' the mother jumpin' round them distracted an' yelpin' like the divil. 'Luk here, now,' says he, "we've had enough o' you an' your interferin'. Are ye a woman at all, hurtin' the poor wee bits o' bastes that never did ye hurt or harm? It'd suit ye better to be lookin' after yer own house an' yer misfortu-

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nit man that ye have the soul pestered out o' than pokin' an' pryin' in other people's homes. D'ye think there is one in Gurtnaskeagh that doesn't be laughin' at ye behind yer back? They wouldn't put up with ye only they do be pityin' ye without chick or child o' yer own to be lookin' out for, an' they do be sayin' that it's not all there ye are or ye'd have more sense than be hanging around where ye're not wanted.' She stud there, the poor soul, without a word out o' her. Finnerty says he was sorry for the crature as soon as he had the words out o' his mouth, an' she got up as white as a ghost and went straight out o' the room."

In the exciting recital of Mrs. Greer's woes Mary had quite forgotten her pose and sat bolt upright in bed, accompanying the tale with "clucks" of sympathy or exclamations of "Did ye ever hear the like?" "Och, God be good to us," "Orrah, the poor soul, sure she means well," while Jane's shrewd eyes noticed every move. What would have been the result of her investigations no man can tell, for just then little Ned Murphy made his appearance at the door with the evening's milk. He came in hesitatingly when he saw his friend Mary in bed.

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In the old days she was always up and about and getting ready delectable apple cake or some other toothsome dainty, but now it was an unfamiliar Mary who got cross if he tried to climb up to kiss her and seemed to want him away, though all the time she would look at him as if longing to catch him and give him a hug. He was relieved to see Jane Byrne, for with her there was never change or danger; she was the one sure anchor of all the children in the neighborhood, who ran to her in every joy and sorrow. When even their mothers sided with the harsh judgment of school teachers and decided that they "were that bad there was no standin' them" and punishment was imminent Jane would stand between them and the just wrath to come and her gentle, "Sure the child can't be well. He's always good when he's well," would fall like balm on his ear, specially when she would go on, as she invariably did, "It's a pettin' the child wants, not a scoldin'," and then the thin arms would gather you up against a very buttony chest and a sense of general well-being would come over the troubled little soul. Oh yes, Jane was a rock of safety in the tumultuous sea of child-

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life in Gurtnaskeagh. She turned quickly as Ned's little bare feet sounded on the earthen floor.

"Why, if it isn't Ned?" she exclaimed. "Sure I hardly knew ye, agradh, ye're growin' that big. It's a real big, strong man ye'll be, as great as Dan O'Connell." That was the bribe she held out to all the small boys, that if they took the medicine or learned the lessons, or whatever it was to which they were objecting, "they would grow up as great as Dan O'Connell." Ned put the milk pail on the bench at the door and running over, climbed up on her knee, and putting his lips to her ear, whispered, "What's on Mary?" Jane looked quizzically at the occupant of the bed before she answered aloud, "What's on Mary? Faith, Ned, alliniv, it 'd take a wiser doctor than me-self to tell ye that. I thought she was terrible bad when I kem in, but now I think she's foxin'." The unexpectedness of the shot, straight to the bull's eye, brought a quick flush to the patient's cheek and made her stutter a little as she answered:

"Sure I'm nearly well, Ned, honey, an' mebbe I'll be up in a day or two an' then it's

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the gran' cakies I'll be makin' for you." That was so like his Nanie of long ago that the faithful lover climbed down from Jane's lap and made an effort to get up on the bed. A look almost of horror came over Mary's face as she hastily shoved the astonished child away, and in a voice of genuine fear shouted, "Don't ye dare come up on my bed, Ned Murphy. Keep off there or I'll bate ye." Ned, wounded to the very heart, began to sob softly as he clung to the ever-faithful Jane, who in absolute bewilderment tried to soothe him, puzzling over this extraordinary symptom of the mysterious disease. Mary broke in on her musing with a hasty, "For the love o' heaven, Jane Byrne, will ye take the child out o' this and send him home to his ma?" And Jane deciding it was the better part, took an abrupt leave.

Outside of the door she made up her mind to take Ned home and incidentally to consult Bridget Murphy about the strange sickness of their old friend. In the midst of the welcoming Ned slipped off with himself and ran back again to Mary's cottage. Just above her bed there was a tiny little window opening out on to Murphy's field, and many a time Ned had

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climbed up to it to give a sudden "boo" and frighten his dear Nanie, so he thought it would be a good spot from which to inspect unseen the strange cross being who seemed to have taken her place. He climbed up noiselessly and carefully, his little bare toes clinging like a monkey to the crevices in the rough cast wall. At last his eyes came level with the opening and he peeped in. He almost cried out in his astonishment at what he saw, and dropping quickly to the ground, ran home as fast as his little feet would carry him and raced breathlessly into the "room" where Jane Byrne and his mother sat in friendly chat over a cup of tea.

"Oh, ma," he screamed, "I went back to peep at Mary, an' she's not in bed atall, but has all her clothes on an' chickens an' eggs in the bed."

"For the love o' God, child, what are ye sayin'?" demanded his mother, almost shaking him in her excitement.

"Sure don't mind him, Bridget," interrupted Jane. "It's only some child's foolishness he's at. Didn't I see Mary meself this minnit and she in bed?"

"She's not, she's not," reiterated Ned, danc-

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ing up and down in his excitement. "Come down the two o' yes and see for yerselves." It seemed the simplest thing to do, so leaving the steaming cups of tea, they started off.

"I wouldn't like to be peepin' in on the crature like that," objected Jane as they got near to the little window. "It doesn't seem honest to me. It'd be a queer pass if I'd go spyin' on Mary, and I tell you I'm goin' straight in be the door."

That course appealed to Mrs. Murphy, so they boldly pushed open the little gate and walked up the front path. Mary seeing them come, jumped into bed, leaving on the hearth two fluffy little chickens in a cardboard box, plain in full view. Their shrill, feeble "peek" was the first thing that caught Bridget's ear as the two women came in, and she stopped in blank amazement. "Then where did ye get the chickens?" she asked, but before she could answer Ned shouted:

"She has more o' them in the bed with her, an' eggs too, and' she hatchin' them out."

Jane and Bridget turned to look at the patient, and there she was, the tears rolling down her cheeks, and she doubled up with laughing

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as she almost sobbed, "Och, but he's the sharp lad, an' I thinkin' I'd hatch them out as fine as any inkybator, and sorra a one a bit the wiser. Well?" she asked as the two visitors stood in silence, "why wouldn't I be able to keep the heat in them as well as a lamp?" She got out of bed, disclosing her fully clad figure covered with a short bed jacket, and turning, pointed with pride to the cosy nest where another chick was pecking its way through the shell, and added ruefully, "Though it was the hard job to be lettin' on to be sick and havin' ye all botherin' the life and soul out o' me."

Her visitors looked helplessly at each other, and falling onto the settle, rocked in a paroxysm of hysterical laughter till at last Ned jumped up in her arms, exclaiming, "Sure ye're the gran' ould hen entirely, Nanie, dear."

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IT ALL began a long time ago when Brideen was a slender slip of a girl with bright brown, wistful eyes, glancing shyly through the tangled mass of red curls that tumbled rebelliously over her face, no matter how often Mary would brush and comb them and impress on their owner that "it was a quare thing entirely to see a great big yahoo of a girl not able to keep herself dacent." In those long-ago days Ned was just such another as herself—untidy, roving, merry as the day was long and as wild as a hare. Many and many a scrape they got into together, he and she, "mitching" from the long, low, white-washed school that stood down at the foot of the hill, looking so dreary and uninviting in the spring days when all the world was crying out to them to come away, down to the weeshie little valley where the primroses, bluebells and violets were peeping, and where you might find the delicate white blossoms of the wood-sorrel any day now—for wasn't it May, and, sure,

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"Mary's tears" ought to be out for Her own month.

Even in those days Ned thought "the world and all" of her, and woe betide any rash youth who spoke of "red head, fiery nob," when he was anywhere near; retribution swift and sure would certainly fall on him, till between the cuffs and kicks he would gasp out, "Sure, it wasn't Brideen I was talkin' o' at all, at all, it was just Nora Cassidy beyant," or some other poor squireless damsel. And Brideen herself? Why, there was no one quite so clever or so brave as Ned! Sure, he was always the first to find the blackbird's nest—once he even found a lark's hidden down in the long, feathery, dancing fairy-grass on the side of the old nunnery hill—and, sure, there wasn't one could whistle or sing like him; he was like a thrush or a blackbird himself. They were such happy, careless days, marked only by some startling event such as the Bishop's visit, when they were all confirmed and Brideen's "heart was in her mouth" for fear she would forget all the religious knowledge that had been crammed into that thoughtless little head—and the pride and joy of it when His Lordship had declared be-

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fore them all that not one of them had the prayers as well as she, even though she did make a slip in that big long question about indulgences! Then, too, there was the awful day when Ned's father—God rest him!—was drowned out in the Bay, and the sad days and nights after when his mother stood by the water's edge, waiting and hoping that the cruel sea would at least bring back her dead that he might rest in the old churchyard above.

But the greatest event of all was the new baby! Could they ever forget the day that Brideen rushed madly down the hill to where Ned stood, whittling a stick and whistling, never thinking of the change that wee scrap of humanity would make in their lives. "Oh, Ned," she gasped, "sure there's a baby above! It kem while I was at school, an' it's a girl, an' they're goin' to call it Kate."

"Hm-m!" grunted Ned, "that manes the end o' our sport. Ye'll have to be after it mornin', noon, an' night, an' sorra a bit o' good ye'll be ag'in."

The quick tears sprang into her eyes as she turned away: "If ye're so quick to give me up, Ned Connolly, ye may. Mebbe me little

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sister'll be good enough company for me," and away she ran to sob her heart out down in the long grass at the back of the church. It was the first time there had ever been even a breath of dissension between them, and often in the long years to come she had looked back on that day, wondering if she possibly could have had a warning of the future, or why else did she cry so bitterly about so slight a shadow? Ned, too, felt out of sorts. "It's so like a girl," he thought, "to make such a fuss about a baby! Aren't there a hundred babies all round the town, and why on earth should Brideen go makin' such work over this one? An' she never even asked where I was this mornin'. I don't believe she missed me out o' school! Och, then, she may stick wid her old baby!" he wound up, as with hot resentment in his heart he went off to join the boys hurling on the strand.

Somehow it seemed after that the good old days were really over; not that Brideen missed them so much, for weeshie Kate was an unending source of joy to her warm little heart, but Ned was a good deal out of it. He could not see the wonderful beauties of the curly pink toes, and the hands—musha, these hands

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were the queerest things you ever saw, the way they got right round your heart and wouldn't let go! And her eyes—surely she must have stolen those great big bits of the sky as she came right down from heaven; they were for all the world like little pot lakes out in the bog, with the long thick lashes like the rushes at the brink and the blue of the sky reflected. And the joy of finding the first tooth, hearing the first word, or steadying the tiny, tottering feet as they stepped across the rough earthen floor! Surely there was never such a baby in all the wide world, and there must be something radically wrong with Ned that he could not see her perfections.

That was the way they drifted apart, and really you could not blame Ned, for even the grown-up neighbors had the same word to say—Brideen was a perfect fool over her little sister.

The years slipped by almost unnoticed till school days were gone for good and all. Ned had taken a share of a boat and was out each night in the Bay, but Brideen, grown into a beautiful, tall, slender girl, found ample work to do looking after the home, for Mary had

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gone to rest and the old father was getting feeble and past his work at the mill. No startling events marked the passing of the days and Ned gradually slipped back into his old place in her life. The day never closed that he did not make his way up to the cottage with a few fresh fish, a bunch of wild flowers or a basket of vegetables from their garden. "An' what 'd I do widout ye at all, Ned?" she'd say. "Sure, we'd be lost entirely only ye're there to ready up the garden, now that Daddy's so bad with the rheumatics." And Ned thought himself more than amply rewarded for his trouble.

Things began to go badly with them one winter; the fishing failed, the frost was so black and hard that not a thing would grow in the little garden patch, and in the middle of it all poor old John slipped away to join Mary. It was a terribly lonely winter for the two girls, and it broke Ned's heart to see Brideen get thin and white as she toiled over the sewing that she had to take in to "keep the roof over the child," as she told him. If only he could make enough to keep his old widowed mother and make a home for the girls he would be happy—but as it was! No wonder he got more and

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more silent as he pondered. There seemed to be only one way—he must go to America. There he would surely make money; there was lots of work there for any strong young fellow. Sure, didn't Shan Lynch come back with a fine city suit on him, and a gold watch and chain, no less, and his pockets just bursting with money?—and he was as good a man as Shan any day. It's true, Shan had seemed a bit changed like; he wasn't so openhanded as in the old days, and he didn't trouble the priest overmuch with his piety. But, then, he never was like the other chaps in a way, and anyhow he hadn't Brideen to be working for.

The long-thought-of day came at last, and it seemed to Brideen that all the sorrow of the world was as nothing to what she felt. They stood silently together on the quay waiting till the last moment to say good-by; all around they heard the sobs of the boys and girls getting on board the tender, and the heart-piercing wails of their mothers and sisters left behind. The old countrymen, in their homespun clothes and white bawneens, stood in silent grief watching the tears of the mothers who, in their white frilled caps, red petticoats,

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check aprons and dark-blue cloaks, clung to their sons or daughters, in the city-made shoddy seeming already to have gone into another sphere.

"God keep ye, Brideen," Ned whispered. "It won't be long till I'm comin' home to ye, wid the help o' God, or mebbe it's sendin' ye the passage to come out to me I'd be. But ye'll not be forgettin' me, asthore, sure I know that!" The whistle sounded, the bell clanged out, and the shout of "All aboard!" broke in and called him away.

As long as a speck could be seen upon the water the crowd stood weeping. God knows no funeral is so heartrending as this every-day sight in Ireland. We know the dead are at rest and with God, but who can tell what is before the son or daughter going out into that great unknown world beyond the seas!

Sorrows, they say, never come singly; maybe it is a mercy, when we are stunned with a great grief the presence of another trouble makes us turn away from our brooding; so perhaps it was out of the greatness of love God sent heavy trouble on Brideen just after Ned had

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gone. Kate came home one day from school heavy, sleepy and headachy.

"I don't know what's on me at all, Brideen," she whimpered, "I'm sick all over, an' me head is that bad I can't keep it up. Can't ye put away that sewin' and take me in yer lap? I think I'd be better if I had me head on yer shoulder."

All evening she held the frail little sister in her arms, soothing her fever with kisses and lullabies till the heavy lids closed and she dropped off to sleep.

Many weeks of anxiety passed while Kate lay hovering between life and death, and when the fever had gone and she was once more able to move about it was found that the sight had left the big blue eyes forever. All the sorrows that had come on her before were as nothing to this. Surely she had done her utmost to be a mother to the little sister, and had nursed and cared for her as best she could, but maybe she should have sent her to the hospital? That was the torturing thought that burned into her brain. Could the sight have been saved had she not insisted on keeping her at home? And kneeling by the bed, she cried out

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in her heart for pity and forgiveness, vowing to always sacrifice herself for the child.

The little cottage up on the top of the hill seemed strangely still that morning. It had been snowing for two weeks, so no one had been up there lately, though often a pitying glance would be sent that way and one or other of the neighbors would wonder how the poor girls were "making out" these hard times.

"Do ye mind, Nora," said old Maggie Riley, "the time poor Ned Cassidy kem home to fetch Brideen?"

"Oorra, to be sure I do! Sure, it was the hard lines on the dacent boy that she wouldn't go out wid him, an' he seemingly havin' the height o' good luck in Pittsburgh."

"That's true for ye, but at the same time I wouldn't be doubtin' she was right. Sure, a terrible big city like that, wid the roar and the dirt o' the streets, and sorra a bit o' garden for the creature to sit out in, 'd be the death o' Katie. An' be the same token, Ned didn't seem to be overly anxious to have her on his hands either. Sure, didn't he say to Mike Gallagher in me own hearin' that it 'd be a sight

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better to put Kate in wid the Sisters up in Dublin than to take her trapsein' over the world!"

"Faith, an' if he did, it was small blame to Brideen to have given him the go-by; he must have a hard heart to think o' takin' the child from her, and she, ye might say, havin' raised her from a baby!"

"Yerra, then, Nora, what 'd ye be sayin' the like o' that for! Sure, God knows there isn't manny a man that 'd be wantin' to take a poor blind girl on his hands, an' he wid his way to be makin' in the world! An' Ned was willin' to pay the Sisters so that she'd be havin' the best o' everythin', and sure he was right. A big city would be no place at all for the like o' her."

"Well, mebbe ye're right, Maggie, but I don't wonder that Brideen wouldn't agree; it's not likely she'd have any comfort in her fine house in America if she was frettin' her heart out for the want o' Kate; an' that's what she'd be doin', as sure as me name is Nora Martyn."

"Well, well, anyhow I think I'll be makin' me way up there to-day, for fear the cratur 'd be wantin' anythin,' though indeed she keeps up a great appearance; but I'm thinkin' she

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must be terrible short these days. Is it dramin' I am, or is there any smoke comin' out o' the chimbley? Faith, there must be sickness or throuble if they'd be lettin' the fire out this kind o' day!"

Just then a terrible cry rang through the air, and the two old women saw Kate stagger to the gate and down the road, calling, "Ochone, ochone! She's dead, she's dead!" Running to meet her, they took her back to the house, where they found Brideen dead upon the little bed in the corner. It needed only a glance around the room to guess the cause. On the table was set a cup and plate for one; a tiny piece of bread was on the wooden platter and an egg lay in the saucepan by the cold hearth, where some five or six sods of turf lay ready for the kindling. The dead woman lay scantily clad, while the blind sister was clothed in all the warm garments they had. The old women looked at each other with understanding eyes while they tried to console the living.

"Come away wid me, asthore," said Nora. "Ye can do nothin', and Brideen wouldn't like for to have ye stayin' here in the cold. Sure, God rest her, she was the good sister to ye an'

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she is havin' her reward now, and it's not wantin' her back ye'd be to hunger and hardship."

"But she wasn't hungry," interrupted the blind girl. "We've been doin' grand these times, an' wantin' for nothin' except the fire, an' it was only because the boys couldn't get in the turf wid the snow that we hadn't that."

"Perhaps ye're right, agradh, perhaps ye're right! But come away wid me now an' we'll go tell the priest and the doctor, though it's little need she has o' them now," she added in an undertone.

Soon the story was passed and the neighbors quickly gathered.

"Yerra, did ye ever hear the like o' that? There she was lettin' on to Kate that they had the height o' fine livin', an' she takin' the very bit out o' her mouth to be givin' her."

"Well, glory be to God, sure a mother couldn't do more than that for her own child! An' what'll become o' the poor blind girl now, at all, at all?"

"Sure, Nora Martyn has taken her home wid her. She hasn't one belongin' to her, an' she says she wouldn't rest happy in her

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bed if she thought poor Kate Conroy was in the blind asylum. She says it's the laste we can do to look after her now when poor Brideen, heaven be her bed this night, gev her verra life for her."

In the old graveyard on the nunnery hill, just by the wall where Ned found the lark's nest long years ago, Brideen lies, while over her head stands a stone with this inscription: "Sacred to the memory of Bridget Conroy. Greater love than this no man hath, that he layeth down his life for his friend." It was Ned who had the stone put up when he came back last year and heard the story of that brave, strong heart.

MICHO'S MATCH

MICHO'S MATCH

"God bless the work!"

The horse was pulled up, and the young man at its head looked round smiling, while the father, who was guiding the plow, turned to greet me, glad it seemed to knock off work and have a bit of a chat.

"God save ye kindly, asthore; it's time for the work to be over for the day, I'm thinkin'; but sure the blessin' 'll keep for tomorra, never fear," and he laughed good-humoredly.

"That it will, and I'm spoiling for a story; let Ned put up the horse while you sit here and chat with me."

"Well, well, sure I suppose I must be humorin' ye, avoureen, an' if ye will be keepin' an ould chap like me idlin' his time, instead of a good-lookin' boy like Ned here, ye couldn't be findin' a finer spot in all Galway." And leaning over the loose stone wall, he pointed out to me the panorama stretched at our feet.

Far away to the left lay Lough Corrib, placid and blue, without a ripple; then, as it

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gradually narrowed in to the river, the opposite shore came in sight, gray and desolate,—rocks! rocks! rocks! sticking up in the midst of the scanty grass, piled together into low walls or used to build the few small cottages dotted here and there. Straight in front, the old city looked quite imposing in the distance with its many spires and tall factory chimneys. If we could only add a little smoke to these! But then we would lose the clear sight of the bay beyond, the glorious bay! more beautiful than any poet's dream on an evening like this, when blue waters reflect still bluer skies, and the brown sails of the fishing boats gleam redly in the sun, while over on the horizon lie the hills of Clare, a soft, rich purple and deep, deep blue. Right round the wooded point of Barna we could see, and on to the right, till Spiddal rose, cut out sharp against the clear sky. It was no wonder the old man felt pride in his beautiful home.

"They do be sayin'," he explained, "them that have gone foreign, that there isn't the like o' that to be seen no matter where ye go."

"I've only seen other parts of Ireland, but

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I know that I never saw its match within the four seas."

"Now, would ye be sayin' that, asthore, well, well," and with a gratified chuckle Tim came over the stile and sat down beside me. After a long pause, to drink in the beauty and to rest, he began again.

"An' it's a story ye're wantin' at this hour o' the day? Did ye ever hear the like? An' what kind 'd ye be wantin'? One about the fairies, or the ould times when there were giants an' heroes, or is it just about the neighbors that were around long ago?" Sighing, as he glanced at the roofless cottages standing in the fields, "An' would ye be likin' a laugh or a cry?" he queried whimsically.

"A laugh, for sure, and I think I'd like to hear about the neighbors best."

"Then ye're right, for ye'll have enough an' plenty to cry over as ye go on, God help us all! An' the story we saw is the one we tell best, so I couldn't be doin' better than tellin' how Micho Laine got his wife. He was a fine boyo in them days,—though ye wouldn't be thinkin' it now to look at him an' he doubled in two with the rhuematics, the crature!—an' every one

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was wonderin' an' sayin' among thimselves, 'Why the divil doesn't Micho be gettin' a wife?' An' the girls were thinkin' it too, though they wouldn't be sayin' it. Every Sunda' after Mass there was many a one watchin' an' wonderin' who'd Micho be walkin' home with; but sure he was the cute lad, an' it's off with Thady Martyn or Shaun Coneely he'd be, an' sorra' a girl at all, though it was he'd have the joke an' the pleasant word for them all."

"The ould Canon was parish priest then, an' sure His Reverence was a caution entirely. There was no standin' the grandeur of him—he'd be callin' his niece 'Miss Lynch,' if ye please, an' he speakin' to them that knew her since she was a bit of a colleen runnin' to school in her bare legs like the rest o' the childer. Did ye ever hear the like? An' he'd come over wid his gran' Englishy accent to me mother, God rest her! an' she his own second cousin, an' called her 'me good woman,' no less. But wid all his high falutin', a better priest never drew breath, nor a better-natured. Orra! It was he had the givin' hand to the poor, an' if there was trouble on ye he'd forget the grandeur quick

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enough, an' be as plain an' simple as Father Pat himself. Sighle, his niece, was a shy, timid little crature, with big innocent brown eyes, for all the world like a weeshy calf, frightened out o' her sinses wid the style of her uncle, an' afeared o' her life she couldn't act up to him. She'd be lookin' at him for every word that kem out o' her mouth, the poor little colleen, but wid all her quiet ways it was she that had caught me brave Micho.

"No one 'll ever know how they med it up atween them, for they kep' it as dark as the night, knowin' well that there was nary a bit o' good for Micho to be askin' the Canon for her. There wasn't a man in Galway, unless a lord or a ginerál, that he'd be thinkin' good enough for one o' the family. It was a year or more they'd be courtin' when the Canon tuk it into his head to go for Micho about settlin'. I was walkin' wid him meself that verra day; we were comin' home from the hurling, an' smokin' an' chattin' as we kem over the brow o' the hill, an' never tuk note o' the Canon till he walked right up to us an' there an' then he began. 'Michael,' says he, 'I was wishin' to speak to ye on a most important matter.'

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‘An’ what ’d that be, yer Reverence,’ says Micho, his heart in his mouth for fear he’d got wind o’ his goin’s on wid Sighle.

“‘It’s time,’ says he, ‘that ye’d be thinkin’ o’ marryin’ an’ settlin’ down, a fine lad like you,’ says he, smilin’ on the rogue, an’ he lookin’ as if butter wouldn’t melt in his mouth. ‘A fine lad like you,’ says he, ‘might have his pick o’ the girls; an’ it’s comin’ near Shrove, an’ I hear no talk about you at all, Michael, how’s that?’

“‘Ye could a knocked me down wid a feather, when I heard the ruffian, as innocent as you please, sayin’ to him, ‘Well, yer Reverence, it’s this way,’ says he, ‘there is a little girl—but not from this part,’ he struck in, afeared he’d be caught; an’ sure it was true, too, for she was born over Spiddal way, ‘an I’d be glad enough to make a match wid her, but her people wouldn’t hear o’ it.’

“‘Oh, nonsense, nonsense, me boy!’ says the Canon, quite hot like, ‘there isn’t a better match than yerself in the country; a good steady lad an’ a nice bit o’ land, too. What is her father at all,’ says he, ‘that they’d be lookin’ down on the like o’ you?’

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“‘Well, no better than me own, sir,’ says me brave Micho, ‘but sure the decent man is dead, God rest him! an it’s her uncle that keeps her that close there is no gettin’ a look at her. He’s an ould bachelor,’ says he, warmin’ to the work, ‘an’ he doesn’t see what a girl ’d be wantin wid a man at all, at all; an’ he’s that full o’ himself he thinks the man isn’t born good enough for any belongin’ to him.’

“‘Me heart was across me wid the fright listenin’ to him, but the poor innocent priest never saw who the rogue was drivin’ at. ‘What a foolish fella he must be,’ says he, fallin’ into the trap like a babby, God help him! ‘It’d be servin’ him right,’ says he, ‘if she ran away wid ye.’

“‘That’s what I’m thinkin’ meself,’ says Micho, ‘but she’ll never consint, unless,’ says he, as if the idea had only come into his head that blessed minnit, ‘unless yer Reverence ’d marry us when she kem.’

“‘Mind ye, that was the first time I saw what he was drivin’ at, an’ it was all I could do to keep meself from laughin’ out. The poor old Canon thought it the grandest idea he’d ever heard. ‘But,’ says he, ‘I’d be wantin’ to get

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the lines from her own priest, afore I could marry ye, an' how'll ye do that?' says he.

" 'If ye'll just write,' says Micho, as quick as ye please, 'that ye're willin' to marry us an' that ye see no reason agin it, then,' says he, 'she'll get the word from her own priest, too. Ah! God bless ye for thinkin' of it, yer Reverence!'

"Widout another word the poor Canon whipt out a book an' began to write—'I know Micho Laine to be a decent, steady boy an' I see no reason why he wouldn't marry'—'Sure, what's her name, Michael?'

" 'Orrah!' says I to meself, 'the fat's in the fire now, an' no mistake.' But ye couldn't be up to the contrivance of the rogue; he hanged down his head, an' looked that shy ye'd think he was a weeshy little girl before the school inspector, an' says he with a grin, 'Wisha now, couldn't ye just put—the girl he wants—yer Reverence?' as if he was ashamed like.

"Wid that the Canon gev him a slap on the back, and says he, 'Well, well, Michael, it's mighty shy ye are, but here goes!' an' laughin' away he wrote—'why he wouldn't marry the girl of his choice, an' I promise to marry them

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on Shrove Tuesday if they present themselves on that day—Signed, Canon Joseph Lynch’—‘Now, how’s that, Michael?’ says he, an’ tearin’ out the page, he gev it to the rogue, and went laughin’ down the hill.

“Well, when Micho had it safe in his fist, and His Reverence was well out o’ hearin’, he let a shout out o’ him an’ catchin’ me by the arm, he ran me across the fields, laughin’ an’ shoutin’ an’ goin’ on like mad, an’ not a bit o’ shame on him for the trick he had played on the innocent priest.

“But shure, ye women are the queer cratures, an’ it’s hard for a man to know where he is wid ye. For, would ye believe it now?”—and Tim turned round and looked at me with all seriousness, as though propounding a most important question of philosophy—“when Sighle heard his story she flared up an’ tould him he was a liar an’ a cheat, deceivin’ even the priest; an’ she’d have nothin’ to say to him or his contrivances! Poor Micho didn’t know where he was wid her, for he’d never seen her like that afore,—she that was always so quiet an’ shy. It was a terrible take down for him intirely, but instead of argufyin’.

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he just took her up in his arms like a wise man an' kissed the sense into her, an' says he, 'Ye'll have everything to say to both me an' me contrivances from Shrove Tuesday on, wid the help o' God, asthoreen, so ye must make the best o' me.'

"Well, when the day came Sighle was in a terrible way, afeared of her life of facin' the uncle, an' 'd was all Micho an' meself could do to get her into the vestry, where the Canon was waitin' for me boyo. She was tremblin' like a leaf, an' her face was as white as the driven snow, so that to tell ye the truth I was thinkin' each minnit she'd be off in a faint, and faith Micho himself was not much better—for the ould Canon was a terrible man to anger. An' when we knocked at the door, an' he shouted 'Come in!' I was near as bad meself as the other two.

"Ye should have seen his face when he laid eyes on them! First he was as black as thunder, an' then the joke o' the thing struck him, an' shure it showed the good heart o' him in spite o' all, for he laughed out, an' says he, 'So, Michael, me boy, ye got the better o' the crusty ould bachelor. Well, I must keep me word to

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ye, so come out to the chapel, an' the blessin' o' God on ye both.' So now asthoreen, haven't I kep' me word, too, an' given ye a laugh?"

"But is it true, Tim, or did you make it up?"

"It's as true as I'm sittin' here, and many a laugh I've had over it with the Canon himself, God rest him! Wid all his grandeur, we'll find it hard to get his like, and he was that good to both Micho and Sighle when trouble kem on them that often Micho 'd say to me, 'Faith it was a mean trick I played on His Reverence, but wid all that it was the best day's work I ever did. It gave me the best wife an' the best friend a man ever had, thanks be to God.'

"Now, agradh, it's time for ye to be gettin' home, ye've a long way to go down to the town, an' darkness 'll be on ye afore ye know where ye are—God speed you, a chuidin! And don't let any Micho whip ye off from me!"



THE FIRST BUTTERFLY



THE FIRST BUTTERFLY

ALL the world was hushed with that deathlike hush that comes just before the storm breaks; the dark, heavy gray clouds gathered in a big bank over the Clare hills, the dull gray water swelled and sank silently. As we watched, the sun broke through a glistening rift and everywhere it touched the water a gleam of silver shone. Suddenly a beautiful white butterfly flew upward into the beam of light—up and up until it vanished from sight.

“Did you see that, ashore?” said the old fisherman beside me. “There’s the priest’s soul goin’ up to heaven.”

“The priest’s soul! What do you mean?”

“An’ d’ye mean to say that wid all yer gran’ eddication ye never heard tell o’ the first white butterfly?” And Tom shook his head sadly at my melancholy deficiency, while I, laughing, coaxed him to begin the story.

“It was a powerful long time ago, the days when St. Kevin was teachin’ over by Glendalough, or mebbe before it—I couldn’t rightly

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be tellin'—but annyhow it was hun'reds an' hun'reds o' years, an' there was a little babby kem, over on the banks o' the Shannon. His mother was a terrible good woman, an' she'd be prayin' that her boy 'd grow up a God-fearin' man an' not be follyin' in his father's path, for he, God forgive him, was a bad lot out an' out. Well, the lad grew, a fine child, an' it looked as though the mother was gettin' her prayer, for day in and day out he'd be runnin' off to the church, listenin' to the monks chantin' an' singin' the praises o' God or stannin' in the school tryin' to pick up a bit o' learnin'—an' he only a wee lad not the height o' yer knee! The monks that were keepin' the school took notice o' the boy an' began to get him into chat, an' they found him terrible sharp entirely. There was nothin' escaped him, an' he was a terror altogether for argufyin'; he'd argue the head off yer shoulders before he'd be done wid ye an' prove the verra nose off yer face. The monks thought the worl' an' all o' him an' were leppin' out o' their skins wid delight when his mother kem an' put him to school, for they were thinkin' that he'd be the makin' o' the place, he so clever, an' wid

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all that so pious, for when he wasn't at his book it 'd be at th' altar he'd be, prayin' his heart out, an' says they to themselves: 'It's a great saint he'll be entirely.'

"Mebbe it was all the prayin' an' fastin' he did in them days that was the savin' o' him in the end—God knows!—for I'm thinkin' it's often a little thing of which no one 'd be thinkin' gets us into heaven. Sure God's good, annyhow, an' He doesn't be forgettin' the little we do for Him like many a one here. Annyhow, the boy grew to be a fine man, strong an' tall, head an' shoulders over all his comrades, an' wid so much learnin' that there wasn't one to come up to him—no, not even the teachers themselves—an' he began to gather the young men about him, settin' up a school of his own. By an' by they kem flockin' from all parts, leavin' the other big schools where the saints were teachin', for they were young, God help them, an' they wanted to be hearin' new things, an' the ol' monks were telling the same truths that they do be tellin' now, but the young lad was talkin' a whole lot o' ramais provin' there was no hereafter, no heaven, no hell, no purgatory, an' never stoppin' till he said that God

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Himself wasn't there, an' that a man hadn't a soul. He was always great on the disputin' an' argufyin', the crature, an' he got so puffed up lis'nin' to himself jawin' an' talkin' that he lost the little sense he had, God help him, an' carried the fools that were lis'nin' to him along the same road. D'ye see the pride had blinded him, an' clever an' all as he was, he hadn't the sense to see what a fool he was makin' o' himself. The worst o' it was that the lads that kem from all parts to hear him took all he'd be sayin' for Gospel, for he'd a way wid him that 'd make ye swallow anny lie he'd be tellin' ye.

"Well, this sort o' thing was goin' on day after day for many a long year, an' the harm was spreadin' over all parts, for the boys he'd be teachin' when they grew up into men'd go out an' be teachin' more, so there was no end o' the mischief. But at last he kem to die, an' it was this way.

"He'd been teachin' an' talkin' all day, an' when sunset kem he lay down to rest without blessin' or prayer—for, 'Sure,' says he, 'when there's no God, who'd I be prayin' to, an' when there's no heaven, what'd I be wantin', an' when there's no hell, what'd I be afeared of?'

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So, priest as he was, he'd not as much as be readin' his Office, God forgive him!

"Well, this night he lay down the same as every other, just like the cow over in the field there, wid no thought o' God an' His Blessed Mother, an' in the middle o' the night an angel kem an' stood by him, an' says he: 'This night ye must die.' Wid that he fell down on his two knees, the crature, an' he began to beg for time, for, says he, 'What'll become o' me poor soul?'

" 'Orrah,' says the angel, 'sure, ye haven't one. Didn't ye prove that entirely to yer own satisfaction?'

" 'Sure I did,' says he, 'but I feel it leppin' out o' me wid the fright now.'

"Well, however it was, he got his choice, either to live for a hun'ed years in peace and plenty an' every pleasure he could be askin', an' then to die an' be buried in hell, or else to have twenty-four hours o' life, but to save his soul in the end if he could find one person wid faith. I'm thinkin' it must ha' been the mother's prayers that got him that chance—it's hard to be tellin' all a mother'll do—or mebbe it was the bit o' prayin' an' fastin' he did when

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a child afore the pride took holt o' him; sure God knows, but annyhow he hopped at the chance an' was off like a streak o' lightnin' to look for a soul wid faith.

"First an' foremost he went to his wife, for priest an' all as he was, he'd got some poor fool o' a woman to marry him, an' he thought he'd be savin' his soul b' her. 'Sure, every woman has faith,' says he; but when he went an' asked her, she up an' says, 'Sure, I had till ye took it from me, an' now I'd be afeared if I thought there was a God above.'

"Verra sad an' downcast, he went off wid himself down to the school where the scholars sat waitin' for him, an' says he, 'Boys, which o' ye believes in God?' an' they laughed an' shouted back, 'Sure, there's no God. Ye showed us that plain yerself,' an' the poor man didn't know what to do. He was clear distracted an' cried out at the top o' his voice, 'There is a God. I know it! It's all lies I've been teachin' ye. Ye must believe it, some o' ye, or I'll lose me soul.' But the lads only laughed the more, an' says they, 'How can ye be losin' what ye haven't got? If ye have a soul, show it to us an' we'll believe.'

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"It was his verra own words they were sayin' back, an' half-mad, he ran out on the road, stoppin' every one he met an' 'askin' them did they believe, an' faith they all had the same answer, 'Sure, ye know we don't. Didn't ye prove to us yerself that there was no God, no heaven, no hell, no purgatory, no soul—nothin' but the world we're in, an' all we need be doin' is enjoy it?' an' on they'd go, leavin' him with precious little enjoyment, the crature,—an' he dreadin' to see the sun go down, knowin' that moment 'd see him before God an' well on his way to hell.

"In despair, he threw himself flat on his face, sobbin' an' cryin' his heart out an' cursin' the day he was born to make such a fool o' himself, an' there he lay till, just before the sundown, he heard a voice speakin' to him. He looked up, an' saw a young slip o' a lad, not more than a child.

"'God save ye,' says the boy, 'could ye tell me the way to the best school an' the best teacher in these parts?'

"'Yes,' says he, tellin' his own name an' his own school; but the child shook his little head o' curls an' laughed.

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“‘Sure, that man is nothin’ but a fool; he does be teachin’ that there is neither God, nor heaven, nor hell, nor purgatory, an’ that we haven’t even a soul because we can’t be seein’ it. What’s on him, at all? Sure, I’m on’y a child an’ no scholar, but I’d down him on that.’

“‘How?’ asked the Master, all full of excitement, an’ the hope risin’ up in him. ‘How would ye, me boy? Speak up.’

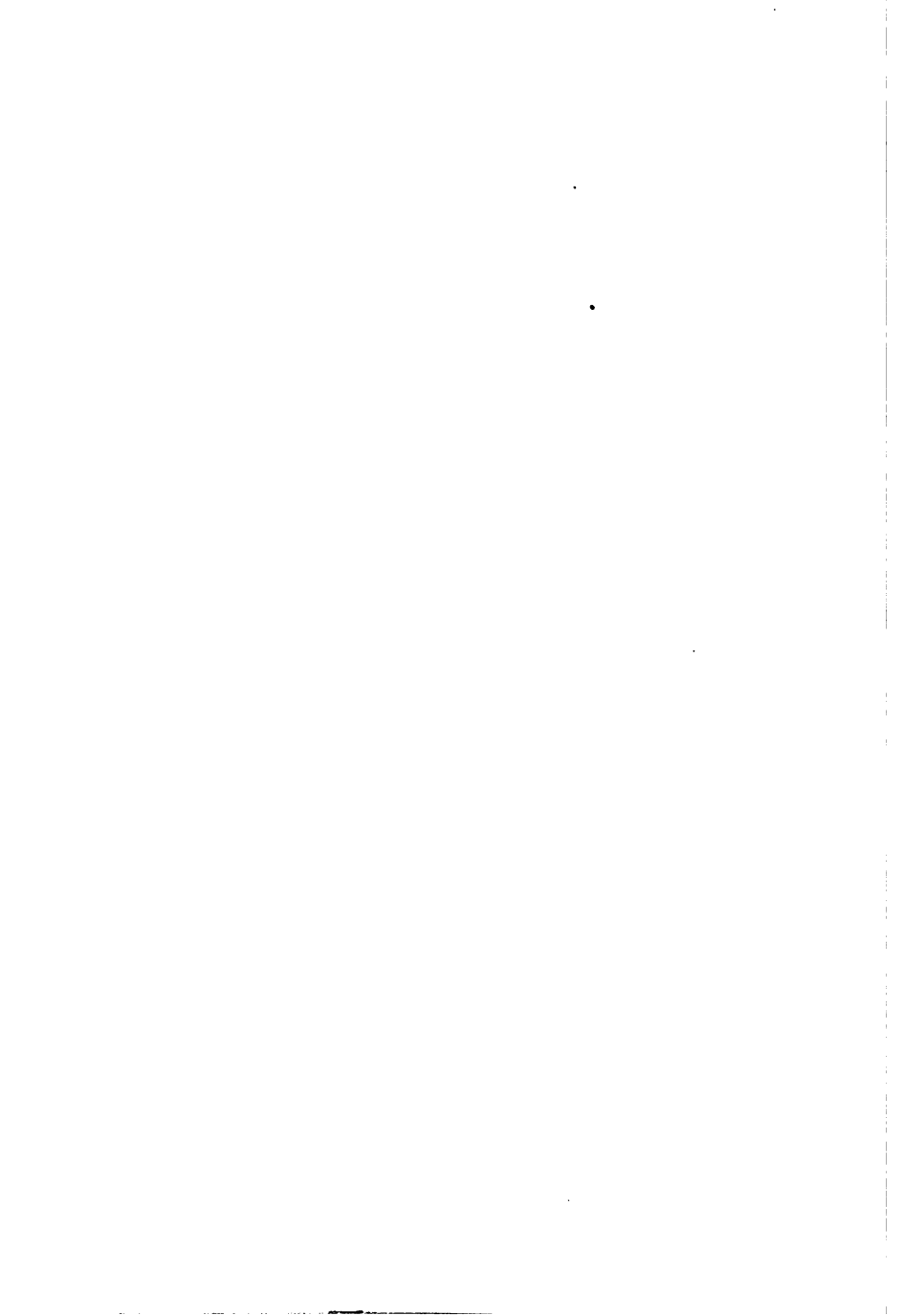
“‘Orrah, he has life, an’ he doesn’t be denyin’ it—an’ has he or anny one else ever seen life?’ an’ the little lad laughed out, while the poor man went down on his knees, an’ liftin’ up his hands, thanked God for savin’ his soul, while the boy stood won’rin’ by.

“‘Then, seein’ the sunset comin’, he said to the lad, ‘Run to the school an’ call out all the scholars that they may see me die, for as my soul leaves the body they’ll see it goin’ up, an’ so they’ll know that all I said was wrong, an’ that there is a merciful an’ powerful God above us, an’ a heaven, an’ hell, an’ purgatory, an’ that I have a soul which’ll be saved by your faith an’ the goodness o’ God.’

“‘So the child went an’ gev the word, an’ the scholars kem runnin’ out an’ they all stood

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round while he knelt there, takin' no heed o' them at all, at all, but just praisin' an' adorin' God an' beggin' the Blessed Mother to be prayin' for him till the sun went down, an' then, just as the last ray o' light was goin', he gev a kin' o' sigh, an' out o' his mouth kem his soul; they all saw it, just like a white butterfly, an' it flew up an' up right into the presence o' God Himself."



MORE LIGHT

MORE LIGHT

"FAITH an' it is a dark corner, there's no denyin' that; far be it from *me* to be makin' anny insinuations agin Matt Conarchy, the dacent man, but I'm thinkin' he wouldn't be so unaisy about the health an' morals o' the place if his cousin Tim wasn't in the gasfittin' business." A delighted grin met Shan Martin's words as he paused to take a deep and satisfying pull from the pint of porter that stood on the counter before him.

"Yerra, Shan, it's yerself that has him sized up for fair an' no denyin'," chuckled Ned O'Mahony, the blacksmith; "sure it's the fright o' the world to think o' havin' two lamps no less at this blessed corner, one over ferninst the barracks beyond an' t'other right on the wall outside." He sighed deeply, thinking of the brilliancy which would illumine his entrance into Naughton's "pub," making him quite visible to his wife Nora should she happen to be at her door at the end of the hill. In the good old days the trees meeting overhead

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shaded the light of the moon so that no human being could recognize their nearest and dearest though they should happen to be on the same side of the road. It was like a deep tunnel when once the sun went down, a great comfort to a poor man who liked to have his drink in peace and quiet after the day's work was done; "an' sorra a bit o' harm in it if herself wouldn't be watchin' an' waitin' every blessed minnit ye're inside."

But Matthew Conarchy, Esq., J.P., R.D.C., P.L.G., Co.C., had at the last meeting of the County Council succeeded, by overwhelming eloquence, in persuading his fellow-members to pass an ordinance that two gas lamps should be placed at "this dark and dangerous corner, where, gentlemen, the innocent child running home at the fall of night might be run over by the passing motor or the vartuous maiden molested by some wandering blagguard. Was it for them," he pleaded, "to consider the few dirty pounds it would cost when they thought of the protection and comfort it would bring to the fair daughters of Cahirnacloch and their fond parents?". He took his seat amidst a loud murmur of applause, then seizing the propi-

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tious moment, the motion was put to the vote and unanimously carried "that two good and substantial iron gas lamps be placed at the corner of the old coach road in the village of Cahirnacloch, barony of Clashmalure, one immediately in front of the barracks of the Royal Irish Constabulary, the other at the opposite side of the road on the path adjoining the property of Mr. James Naughton, the contract for the same to be given to their esteemed fellow-citizen, Mr. Patrick Maher."

And so it came to pass that the sweet seclusion of Naughton's "pub" seemed gone forever, and many a man heaved deep, earnest imprecations on the head of that great and good man, Matthew Conarchy, Esq., J.P., R.D.C., P.L.G., Co.C. He of course had the satisfaction of work well done for the public good, that good to which he never failed to declare his undying devotion and his willingness to lay down his very life if necessary, a life which Shan Martin irreverently declared would be "divil a loss to man or beast."

The lamps were erected in due time, and very fine they were, casting a bright light all down the steep hill from the "pub" to the row

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of little thatched cottages at the end, even to the very door of O'Mahony's forge, and up the road from the barracks to the churchyard gate and across to the Ballinskelling road down to the turn. Sergeant Brady himself wasn't too well pleased with the change. True, he was on pretty good terms with the people round and was as well liked as a "peeler" could be, but sometimes he had to enforce the strong arm of the law, and it was not always advisable to have his goings out and comings in so visible to the lawless world. No one seemed quite satisfied except the public-spirited J.P. and his deserving cousin, Pat Maher. Not even the "vartuous maidens" were overjoyed, for the long walk under the trees with the faint silver beams of the moon meandering through the thick foliage here and there had a great charm, and many a bashful "boy" had found his courage during the walk home from the May devotions or the winter celidh at the Gaelic League. Those declaring lights would destroy the romance in a Romeo or a Rosalind, to say nothing of a shy Irish boy or girl, so it was no wonder that a very short time saw the offending lamp a wreck. Glass broken, burner gone,

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and no one a bit the wiser as to how it happened.

The light at the barracks gate still shone. It was just as well to know when the sergeant started out each evening for his "beat"; anyhow it would take a good deal of foolhardiness to go to the very seat of "law and order" to commit an indictable offence, such as smashing the village lamp. So it shone on undisturbed, casting the opposite corner into still deeper shade by contrast.

Now every one liked Sergeant Brady himself—"a decent chap, that never did a crooked turn in his life to man or beast"—but the hatred of his office gave a zest to any joke or trick aimed at him. Many a story would be told at Naughton's bar or down by the forge fire of how such a one "took a rise out of the peeler," and no tale was so sure of appreciation. Mickeen Beg, Ned O'Mahony's tiny little son, had often crept into the forge and curled up unnoticed in a corner, listened to the men's chat, planning how when he was a man he would play some glorious trick to be handed down to future generations. At first he did not see any exactly feasible plan,

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but "patience and perseverance got a wife for his reverence," and at last the idea came.

The dismantled lamp was of the bracket variety and projected from a thick matted growth of ivy, where many a birdeen built its nest in the spring. One thrush had come there year after year, and as yet no boy in the village had discovered the spot. Mickeen had bragged that he would find it, so he started out to creep along the wall from the gate post, examining every inch as he wriggled over the uneven curbing. "Yerra," he muttered to himself, "it's a queer ould thrush that I couldn't folla. I'll not lave a leaf I won't be lookin' under, but shure mebbe it might be on the side o' the wall an' I'd niver get at it atall, atall."

Just then he caught sight of the lamp bracket sticking out not more than a couple of feet from the top, and with a little cry of exultation he let himself gently and cautiously down. It was a great vantage ground from which to search the ivied recesses, so he sat contentedly astride on the iron bar kicking his heels and carefully surveying the expanse of green. But there was no sign of the illusive

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nest, and tired of his exploration in that direction, he carefully shifted round to examine the wreck of the lamp.

"Faith an' it was a fine big lamp too," he soliloquized. "Mebbe I'd fit into it."

That was too evidently an inspiration to be neglected, so little by little he wriggled himself along the arm and crept up into the old lamp, utterly regardless of the small jagged pieces of glass that still clung to the frame and tore his already well-worn breeches into further fragments. It was a delightful place for a small boy with any imagination, and Mickeen, who had never even seen the sea, but had heard many a story of the sailors out on the great ocean, forthwith pictured himself as up on the top of the mast in the "crow's nest" watching over the surging waves for icebergs, whales, flying fish, sea-serpents and mermaids. The trees overhead sighed in the breeze and the ivy rustled with its teeming burden of life, while enchanted the wee lad shut his eyes and listened. "It's for all the world like the big shell at home," he whispered. "Och, this is the grand place entirely, an' sorra a soul knows a thing about it but meself."

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He stopped dreaming and became very much alive as he heard a measured tread coming up the hill. "It's the sergeant," he thought; "I must stay quiet or he'll be catchin' me an' then he'd be sayin' it was me broke the lamp." On and on came the steady tramp of the heavy regulation boots and right under the bracket the sergeant passed.

Even had he looked up he could not have seen the tiny figure curled in the iron cage above, for the darkness was impenetrable and the ivy grew out in luxuriant profusion beneath the supporting arm. That he was actually invisible broke on the enchanted Mickeen. "He never saw sight or light o' me," he chuckled. "I might as well ha' been in the thrush's nest for all he'd be knowin'. Och, sure, an' wasn't it the pity I hadn't a weeshy stone or somethin' to be droppin' down on him?" It seemed almost a sinful waste of perfectly good opportunity till he remembered that the sergeant passed every night and no one was going to steal the lamp before the next evening. "I'll fill me pockets wid rocks," he thought, "an' just as soon as he comes under I'll rattle them down on his cap an' lie as still

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as a mouse an' he'll be wonderin' and wonderin' where they're comin' from, an' sorra a bit o' him will ever fin' out.'

Accordingly the next night found the valiant Mickeen in his lookout laden down with a choice and varied collection of pebbles. Tramp, tramp came the steady walk of the constable past the "pub," past the gate into Naughten's haggard and under the lamp. Pitter patter, drop, drop, came the stones in a regular fusillade on his cap. The amazed and indignant sergeant stood aghast. Such an unwarranted attack on the dignity of the law was unheard of, and stare as he might, there was no sign of the offender. The stones seemed to have come directly out of the starlit heavens.

"Well, I'll be hanged," he gasped. "Who the divil did the like o' that?" He took off his cap and gazed inquiringly at its smooth blue surface defiled for the first time in its blameless life by the dusty mark of small irreverent stones. Yes, there they were, "one, two, three, four, five," he counted aloud, to the unqualified delight of his unseen listener, "an' that big mark might be med by a whole fistful or mebbe a terrible big rock entirely. Glory be to God,

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it beats me." He stood gaping up, so near to the small bare foot that Mickeen trembled lest he should be seen, but the clustering ivy hid him as with the famous "cloak of darkness" of the fairy tales, and after a puzzled shake of the head the constable walked off swearing softly but earnestly to himself.

It was a glorious achievement, but Mickeen thought he had better keep his own counsel for a while and see what way the "cat 'd jump." A deadly silence apparently lay over the sergeant's misadventure, and not all the hero's listening gathered even a breath about the mysterious stones. Next night he stole again to his watch tower, feeling a veritable pirate chief as he waited. First came Naughten himself driving in at the yard gate, then a group of men chatting over the news of the day. "Yerra, an' did ye hear that ould Shan Kinsella has got the bronkitties, an' they do be sayin' he's on the down o' the hill, the crature?" he caught John MacDonnel say as they passed, and before he could hear the answer he chuckled softly, crouching cautiously down, for his brother Tom came running round the corner to fall into a careless and unconscious stroll as he caught

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sight of Brideen O'Keeffe carrying a pail of water from the spring in Naughten's yard. "God save ye, Brideen," he called. "That's a fine load ye have there. Here, give it to me. I'm goin' down to Conner's an' I'll be to the gate wid ye."

The girl set down the pail and glanced shyly up at big Tom while she wiped the perspiration from her brow.

"Och, it's not that heavy, Tom, but the night is hot, thank God for it, an' I'll be glad you'd give it a lift."

"What's yer hurry?" he demanded, as she started to walk on. "Sure ye're all out o' breath an' ye might as well stan' an' get rested afore ye go on." Then, his voice sinking into a lower key, "Faith, the light o' yer eyes throws more light on the road than Conarchy's lamp did."

Brideen stopped with a little self-conscious laugh, and drawing her shawl still farther over her face, answered, "Ye needn't be tryin' to put the comether on me, Tom, at this time o' day. But sure kind father to ye, Ned's forever an' a day jokin' the girls."

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"Sorra a lie in it, Brideen. I could see the shinin' o' them the minnit ye kem out o' the yard. There's no use talkin', but I give it up to you for the flower o' the county."

"Oh, then, an' bad manners to ye, Tom, come on home out o' this an' don't be talkin' yer nonsense." Yet for all her hurry she seemed to go very slowly and to be enjoying the "nonsense" that Tom stooped down to whisper in her ear, and Mickeen almost disclosed his hiding place in a burst of impish glee as he thought of the glorious weapon he had over the redoubtable Tom. More loving couples came strolling by, but none stopped beneath his refuge, so he could only call on his vivid imagination to supply the words. It kept him amused until he heard the steady oncome of his natural enemy the sergeant. With almost breathless anxiety he waited until the exact moment and again the fusillade pattered down on the hitherto inviolate cap. Again the sergeant stopped and glared up at the overhanging ivy. He thrust his cane savagely hither and thither in the thick clusters, carefully avoiding the lamp for fear of bringing down any of the broken glass on his upturned face.

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Then with a curse he turned round on his heel and marched straight into Naughten's yard. Never before had he gone prowling round in these semi-private premises. Of course he had a perfect right, as representative of the law, to investigate if he had any suspicion of crime; a trifle like waiting for a search warrant was quite beneath his notice, but he always liked to stay on friendly terms with the people, and he knew well the intrusion would be bitterly resented by James Naughten. He swung through the gate in time to meet the owner coming apparently from the hayrick back of the spot where Mickeen lay concealed. The two men stood staring at each other in blank astonishment.

"Well, glory be to God," thought the amazed constable, "who on the living earth would have thought that a decent man like Naughten would do the like o' that on me?"

"The divil mend ye," thought Naughten, "what are you smellin' aroun' my yard for?"

Neither spoke for a second, then the publican, recovering himself, spoke with apparent friendliness.

"It's a fine night, praise be to God. Are ye

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comin' in for a drink, sergeant?" he asked; but Brady with a curt "Not to-night" was already out of the gate.

Jim almost ran to the house to find "herself" and consult that oracle on this marvellous turn of events. She was behind in the kitchen readying up after the tea.

"Bess, Bess," he exclaimed, "what the divil did the sergeant want in the yard?"

The good woman sat deliberately down to consider the situation. "Now there's no knowing what the like o' them peelers would be after," she mused. "The license'll be out in October an' I wouldn't put it pass him to be tryin' to lift it from ye for that good-for-nothin' nephew o' his."

"Oh, then bad cess to him," groaned James. "If that's what he's after I'll make him smell hell for it, so I will, takin' the very bit out o' me mouth. But sure what grounds could he be havin'? I never gev bit or sup on a Sunday or after closin' hours, an' every drop that comes into the house has seen the customs." The clear conscience gave him hope, but Elizabeth had no such confidence.

"Let ye prove that, me boyo!" she laughed.

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"It's easy talkin', but where 'd your word be against the peeler's? Och, there's no gettin' roun' them chaps, the curse o' Cromwell on them. But sure there's no good talkin', 'what will be will be,' an' my advice to ye is to keep a still tongue in your head and speak fair and easy to him when ye get the chance." It was good advice, too, though hard of following when burning under a deep sense of injustice, but Jim Naughten resolved to be more careful than ever about giving a handle to any accusation the policeman might be plotting against him.

Mickeen, delighted with the continued success of his adventure, with no thought of retribution to follow, began to plan further attacks on the unfortunate guardian of the law in Cahirnacloch.

"The weeshy rocks don't do much to him," he considered. "If I could get a few good soft haws or blackberries or mebbe a bird's egg to let down on him—an' for why not? It'll be easy getting them." Accordingly next night saw the valiant Mickeen set out with both pockets filled to overflowing with all the "gran' squashey" missiles he could lay hands on.

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There were blackberries, hurtleberries, haws and a couple of addled bird's eggs which he stole from a nest as he went up.

While he waited patiently for his victim's arrival, Jim Naughten and his wife pondered over the duplicity of "peelers" in general and Sergeant Brady in particular. "I saw him prowlin' around again this mornin'. Bad cess to him," sighed Bess. "It was in by the haggard he kem, and roun' by the hayrick, lookin' at every inch o' the way, whatever he thought he'd be findin'. I wouldn't put it pass him to be hidin' a cruiskeen o' poteen himself an' then lettin' on to have found it."

"Orrah, go long wid ye," exclaimed Jim. "Sure, bad an' all as he is, he wouldn't do the like o' that on me."

"You couldn't be tellin'," insisted Mrs. Naughten, who had a deep-rooted suspicion of anything that bore the English brand. "There's many a man that's gone to the bad wid the company he'd be keepin', an' Brady's in the force for goin' on twenty year or more."

Her husband listened in silence. He had all an Irishman's belief in the wisdom of "herself," and it was true enough, there must be a black

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drop somewhere in a man who'd join the force at all, and there was no telling where it'd come out. "I spoke to Constable Hennessy to-day," he said. "I was at the door of the shop an' he passing, so I asked him in an' gev him a drink; he's a decent boy, more's the pity of him bein' what he is, an' when he was takin' the drop I asked him what was on the sergeant, at all, at all. He said there wasn't a ha'porth that he knew, but sure that means nothing, for the sergeant wouldn't be likely to be lettin' him in on his dirty plans."

"Och, now, an' I'm sorry ye didn't keep a still tongue in yer head, Jim. Wouldn't ye know that young gomeral would go straight back to the barracks an' tell the sergeant every word you were after sayin'? They hang together like a pair o' thieves. But sure there is no good cryin' over it now. I tell you, Jim Naughten, if I was in your shoes I'd go out on the haystack an' lie flat down on the top and watch that ould blaggard to-night. He was after no good when he kem sneakin' aroun' the morning, an' it might be as good for you to see what he'd be doing the night."

Accordingly Naughten went out, and hid-

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ing himself in the hay, lay watching the road.

In the meantime Constable Hennessy had gone straight back to the sergeant, just as Bess had foretold. "I went in to Naughten's," he said, "to get a drink. He was at the door and asked me in as I was passing, and he has some notion in his head that you are after him for something or another. I told him there was sorra a thing again' him, but he didn't seem easy."

"An' so well he might be oneasy," growled Brady. "I'm tellin' you, Hennessy, that James Naughten is not all he lets on to be. I'll say no more, but don't you be too flush with your friendship for him, or it may be worse for you," and taking up his hat and cane, the irate superior stalked out of the barracks door and down the Ballinskelling road so as to come on Naughten's by the more indirect way up the hill.

Mickeen lay like a little bird in his nest and never gave a sign of his presence as the boys and girls came singly or in couples up the road. It was the night for the Gaelic League dancing class and the young people were making their way to the rooms. Then came Nick

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the piper to play for them and the dancing teacher on his bicycle coming from a language class in the next town. Mickeen heard his cheery greeting to the sergeant as he came up the hill and got ready his ammunition. Naughten too heard the words and wriggled silently nearer the wall to peer over, both watcher quite unconscious of the other. Brady slowed up as he came to the overhanging ivy and raised his face to get a good survey of the spot. Splish splash down came a bird's egg almost into his half-open mouth, followed by another and a perfect shower of overripe berries of every description and a varied collection of mud and dirt. A wild, half-smothered scream of anger and disgust broke from the unfortunate guardian of the law as spitting and spluttering he stood on the side of the road cursing, swearing and trying to wipe the hopeless muck from his face and shoulders. Naughten lay flat, staring in blank dismay at the havoc wrought on the spotless uniform and immaculate cleanliness of the sergeant, while Mickeen, for once afraid, cowered back in his "hidy hole," realizing suddenly the heinousness of his crime. He never budged from his perch

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until the irate sergeant had rushed across the road to shelter and then slid rapidly down the bracket, over the wall and out, almost touching the concealed publican in his flight. Then and only then did the whole situation break on Jim Naughten, and tumbling back on the hay, he rolled in a helpless fit of laughter. "Oh, Lord," he gasped. "Did ye ever hear such language in your life? It was enough to cook the eggs in his mouth." Again he roared at the recollection, and staggering and stumbling in a blind paroxysm of mirth, he made his way across the yard and into the kitchen to share the fun with herself.

"In the name of the Lord, Jim Naughten, what's on ye?" she demanded, as he almost fell into the kitchen, still choking with the wild, hysterical spasm of laughter. "Sit down, man, an' don't be makin' such a fool o' yerself. What the divil are ye yellin' an' roarin' at?" and she almost shook him in her impatient curiosity.

"Och, the sergeant," he gasped, "ye'd never do a day's good if ye saw him an' the eggs runnin' down his chin an' the language he was

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usin', sure it 'd beat a camp o' tinkers," and again he went off helplessly.

It was too much for Bess, and grabbing the wet dishcloth that she had dropped into the pan of water, she gave him a clout in the face. "Will that bring ye to yer senses, ye omadhaun ye?" she demanded as the astonished Jim stopped laughing and glared indignantly. "Now what are ye talkin' about, ye fool? The sergeant—and eggs—and tinkers—and language; faith it 'd want to be the quare language that 'd stagger you."

"If ye'd stop talkin'," replied Jim, trying to collect the remnants of his moistened and scattered dignity, "I might be tellin' ye what happened, but sure mebbe ye'd rather have me room than me company ye're so free wid yer washin'," and he turned to go.

"Orrah, come back, avic," coaxed Bess, afraid her methods had been a wee bit too severe. "Sure ye'd vex the patience o' a saint an' you grinnin' there wid the joke all to yourself. There rub off yer face wid the roller and come over an' tell me."

The publican was too anxious for an audience to resist the implied apology, and soon

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he had the joy of seeing herself reduced to the same state of helpless, uncontrolled mirth which she had so resented in him. "Och, Jim, agradh," she gasped, wiping the tears from her eyes, "it's no wonder the sergeant was black agin ye if that's the treatment he's been getting every night under your wall. It's to the lunatic asylum he'll be havin' ye committed as sure as your name's James Naughten."

"Easy now, Bess; it's all very well to be jokin', but how am I goin' to get him to believe me that it was that little divil o' a Mickeen?"

"Ye'd better be sayin' nothin' to any one, but just put him onto it private an' let him catch the brat in the act, for faith ye'd be hard set yerself to be believin' the child 'd think o' the like o' that if ye didn't see him with yer own two eyes."

Accordingly next day when Constable Hennesy came in for a drink Mrs. Naughten asked him to tell the sergeant that "himself" would like a word with him if he could be stepping in before he went on his beat.

"Faith he has the cheek o' the divil," growled the injured officer when his junior duly delivered the message. "Does he think I'm a fool

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that I can be bamboozled into passin' over the like o' that?" and he pointed at his cap all stained and dilapidated past hope of repair. The younger man tried to look sympathetic, but an irresistible desire to laugh as he remembered his superior's appearance when he came rushing in the night before made him go hastily out, leaving the sergeant still mumbling and growling to himself.

When Jim had come in his wife told him of the message she had sent. "Sure, woman, dear," sighed her husband, "ye don't think he'll come, an' he thinkin' I did the like o' that on him? I'd better go out an' meet him as he comes down by the Ballinskelling road, so that he'll have the word before he gets roun' to the gate, an' if be anny chance he does come in you can be tellin' him the story, an' mind ye don't be grinnin' or it's mad entirely he'll be," and with that he went off, leaving Bess to face the sergeant.

It was almost dusk when that potentate came in at the door with a surly nod in answer to Bess's enthusiastic greeting. "Come on in to the back, sergeant," she invited. "Himself is out, but I can tell ye what he'd be wanting."

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The policeman followed, grimly silent and thinking in his heart, "The spalpeen, leavin' the woman to face me; he thinks she'll be gettin' the soft side o' me, but I'll show him."

A glowing turf fire burned brightly on the hearth, the kettle swung singing on the crane, the tinnies on the hanging dresser shone and twinkled in the glow and the very dishes standing in neat rows in the drainer seemed to smile a welcome. Unless you were "very black entirely," it couldn't help but soften you a little, and the sergeant almost imperceptibly melted in the genial domestic atmosphere.

"Sit down there by the fire," urged Bess hospitably, bustling about to get the "drop" for the punch and the sugar and lemons. "I'm sorry himself isn't in. He went down by the Ballinskelling road to make sure o' getting you, for he was afeared ye wouldn't come in after last night. O' course I knew that you were too sensible a man to imagine that he had anything to say to the contraptions o' that little devil," she went on, taking no notice of the stiffening that followed her allusion to the night before.

"What 'little devil' are ye talking about, ma'am?" demanded the policeman. "Be more

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explicit. There are too many o' that breed, little and big, for me to be identifying the individual from that description."

Bess laughed at the official sally before she went on: "Sure it's Mickeen Beg I mean. Himself was that worried seein' you were so black wid him an' he not knowin' the rayson that I told him he ought to get on the watch an' see what was on yer mind, an' last night," she bent hastily over the kettle for a moment as she steadied her voice, "he saw what happened, an' as he lay paralyzed wid the fright, what should he see but the child slidin' out o' the broken lamp an' runnin' away for dear life."

Brady sat listening in semi-incredulous astonishment. Could it be true that a mere baby would have the audacity to throw sacrilegious eggs and berries on the sacred person of the law as personified by him, Thaddeus Brady, in the town of Cahirnacloch? If this was so, how could it be proved? As though seeing the question in his mind, Mrs. Naughten went on. "I was thinkin', sergeant, that you'd be hard set to believe the like o' that onless ye saw it wid yer own eyes, so I told himself to keep a still tongue in his head an' then ye could come

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on the young imp from the back and catch him as he lay in wait for you. To tell you the truth, though, I'm half afeared that he won't be on to it to-night, for sure he'd want to have the divil's own brass to do it again after last night."

The sergeant stood up deliberately. He was still suspicious that there was more behind it than met the eye, and he was not going to give any signs of melting until he was absolutely sure of Naughten's innocence. "Well, ma'am," he said slowly, "it was an audacious act, an' them that put the child up to it will have to pay for it. I'll be goin' on now, thank ye kindly," and he turning went ponderously away.

It was no wonder that Bess Naughten had her doubts as to Mickeen's courage being equal to the strain of another attack on the sergeant. All day he had been supernaturally good, hanging quietly around the forge, straining his ears to catch every word in that seat and center of local gossip, but a pall of silence hung over the adventure of the night. No one seemed to have heard a word as yet, and gradually his courage crept back. The sky still hung in its place, he saw Constable Hennessy pass twice

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looking just the same as usual, he even ventured up the hill a bit and caught a glimpse of the sergeant quietly digging potatoes for his dinner as though he had never even heard of an addled egg, till at last the bewildered Mickeen began to wonder could he possibly have dreamed it all. As sunset came he made up his mind to have one more try for immortal fame. All his past efforts were useless unless they could cause some stir. Were he to brag to the other boys they would not believe him, and could he blame them when even the victim did not seem to object. Accordingly he filled his small pockets again with all the odds and ends he could find and slipped off to climb into his perch, never dreaming of the fast-coming retribution.

The evening had closed in and the usual groups of people had passed down the hill and Mickeen began to arrange and select his missiles. "Them fraughans will make a gran' black sploch on his gob if he looks up, and the burs'll stick all over him. It's the pity o' the world I haven't another rotten ould egg," and the small sinner gave a regretful sigh that changed into a dismal yell of fear as a heavy

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hand was laid on his shoulder, and gazing down on him he saw the frowning face of Sergeant Brady. "Come on up here, ye young blagguard ye," commanded his captor. The victim wriggled and whimpered. "Sure I didn't mean no harrum at all, at all. Och, I won't git down, I won't, I won't," as the heavy strong arm of the law dragged him relentlessly from his perch up on to the wall, on to the haystack and down the ladder to the yard, fighting and resisting every step with all his small strength. Not all his tears and prayers could move the stern exponent of justice, so over to the barracks he was led and into the small guard room, where he was locked and left to consider his position, while the sergeant went out to talk the matter over with his subordinate.

"It's hard to believe the like o' that babby would think o' it himself, and I'm thinkin' that Naughten put him up to it an' is tryin' to hide behind the child now, the spalpeen."

"Ah, then I'd be hard set to believe that bad o' the decent man," objected Hennessy, "but sure it'll be easy findin' out. I'm thinkin' the little imp has the wits frightened out o' him be

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now an'll be glad enough to tell ye the holy all o' it."

"It's my opinion that it'll do him no harm to stay a bit longer be himself, but you step down to his mother an' not have the woman frettin' her heart out not knowin' rightly what's become o' him," said the soft-hearted sergeant.

When Hennessy came back the prisoner was brought into the dread presence and majesty of the law with all due formality. He was long past the relief of crying, and stood sobbing breathlessly, his white little face all stained with the dried tears as the sergeant regarded him sternly and drew out a big black book from the high desk, behind which he sat with his most official air.

"Well, Michael Mahony," he demanded, "what have you to say in extenuation of your heinous offense agin' the law?"

Mickeen's sobs broke out afresh at the sound of the unfamiliar and awe-inspiring words. "Och, sure," he wailed, "I never meant a ha'-porth o' harm. The men do be tellin' down at me pa's forge about the way Peter O'Con-

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nor did be foolin' ye, bringin' the fi' poun' fine in the ha'pence in the ass' cart, an' how it was they med a hare o' ye over the ould still in the mountains, an' sure I thought it was fine fun to be havin' a joke on ye an' that sorra a one 'd say a word to me for it, an', an' I thought me da 'd be laughin' an' thinkin' the world an' all o' me an' the boys be tellin' o' it," and the disappointed and disillusioned Mick-keen broke out into a fresh howl of balked ambition.

Poor Constable Hennessy, as he heard the innocent witness narrate the gossip at the forge and saw the gathering thunder on his superior's brow, his sense of humor proved too strong and he undid the work of years by exploding into unrestrained laughter. Mickeen stared in blank astonishment, wondering what could be the matter as the unfortunate young man tried to smother his mirth in a desperate fit of coughing.

"That's a mighty bad cold ye have, Hennessy," remarked the sergeant dryly. "Ye'd better be gettin' the doctor to have a look at ye." Then turning to the prisoner he went on: "You're only a wee bit o' a boy, so ye don't

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realize the extint o' your crime, an' for your mother's sake I'd like to be givin' ye another chance, but I'm afeared I'll have to hold ye for trial an' have ye committed to the reformatory." Mickeen's howls broke out afresh at the threat, and the officer sat immovably with pursed-up lips drumming his fingers on his desk. Then musingly he continued, "Of course if ye told me who put ye up to it an' promised to be a good, decent lad in the future I might get ye off, but——"

"Och, then, sergeant," protested the criminal, "sorra a one put me up to it an' I'll swear to ye that I'll never do the like o' that as long as I live. Ochone, sure it was the sorry day I ever went lookin' for the ould thrush at all, at all," and his sobs stopped him off, to be broken by a cry of joy as his mother made her appearance at the guard-room door.

"I'll trouble ye, Sergeant Brady," she began, "to gimme me child and not be frightenin' the wits out o' an innercent babby. It's fine sport, faith, for two big men to be badgering a child like that. Come here, alliniv, an' tell yer mammy all about it. Isn't it the bould boy

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ye were to be throwin' things at the sergeant an' spoilin' his gran' uniform?"

The repentent sinner clinging desperately to his sure haven of refuge, dumbly nodded while the tears flowed down his cheeks and he rubbed his tousled little head against his mother's breast, and the sergeant, winking behind his back, began to hem and haw. "Well, Mrs. Mahony, ma'am, I don't know whether I'm within me rights in lettin' Michael home wid ye until I get a permit from the magistrate, but seein' as he says he didn't rightly know what a bad thing he was doin' and seein' that he has promised to be a good boy for the future, I'll let him out in your charge for this time, but mind ye, Michael, if at any time ye do the like o' that again I'll be havin' to take ye up to Cork an' puttin' ye in jail to be held for the quarter sessions, an' it's then the judges will be sendin' ye off to a reformatory, an' God knows if ye'd ever lay eyes on yer ma again. Oh, it's a terrible way to be beginnin' yer life, terrible entirely."

It was certainly a terribly subdued and considerably moist small boy who was led by his mother down the hill and tucked up in bed

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with many reminders of his pledges of reformation.

When the barrack's door closed on the paroled prisoner Constable Hennessy started piling coal on the fire and sweeping up the hearth, making himself very busy in an endeavor to blot out the memory of his untimely fit of laughter, while the sergeant silently lit his pipe and stood by the window gazing out at the trim little garden with its patch of grass edged round with neat beds bordered with bachelor buttons and London pride, fit emblems for the force, the hedges closely clipped against the low whitewashed wall and the smooth gravelled path. At last he turned slowly and walked over to the fire. "Hennessy," he began, "did ye mind what the youngster said about his da and the men at the forge? Well, I'm thinkin' there's more behind that than appears to the eye. There's no good doin' where the reprisintative of the law is med a joke an' a byword, an' it might be as well to keep yer eye on Ned Mahony an' his friends." Hennessy murmured an incoherent assent, thankful that his offense was likely to be overlooked, and the sergeant went on. "Naughten

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didn't know a blessed thing about it, but mebbe it would be as well not to make too free wid him all at once, an' then if he knows anything about them that do be down at the forge ye might be able to get it out o' him. His license is nearly out an' he'll be anxious to have the good word o' the police when he's applyin' to have it renewed." And without waiting for any comment from his subordinate, Sergeant Brady betook himself out to see after his dogs for the night, for they were the pride of his life.

Ned Mahony could not make out why the sergeant had grown so distant, not that they were ever very close friends, but still every one seemed sooner or later to drop into the forge and stand around the glowing fire, watching the red iron drawn swiftly forth and the bright sparks fly as the hammer came down with a ringing blow. There was a fascination about the sight, and then, too, it was the great center for news. Men from the mountainy parts and for a long way round in the country would bring their horses down to be shod, their plows to be mended, the wheels of their carts to have new axle pins, and every one brought his share of gossip from his part of the world.

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so what more natural than the evening gathering to glean the latest intelligence, and Sergeant Brady had often joined the circle, though, to tell the truth, the fountain of information did not flow quite so freely when he was present. Since the destruction of Mick-
een's dream of future fame the sergeant had never put in an appearance, and Constable Hennessy had developed an unpleasant habit of coming in so quietly that often he would have been standing for several minutes listening to the conversation before his presence was discovered, and it was beginning to get on Ned's nerves. "What the divil are they after?" he asked "herself" impatiently. "Ye'd think it was the days o' the Fenians an' that I was plottin' a risin'. Surely to goodness, they aren't down on me for the thrick o' the boy?"

"Then that's what it is, if ye ask me," answered Nora decidedly. "Did ye ever know one that did a ha'porth to a peeler an' got off wid it? If they can't get them that did it they'll have it out o' some one or die for it. Bad cess to them. They know right well there was nought but foolishness in it with the child an' there was nothing they could be doin' to him, so

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now they'll never rest easy till they get a houl't o' you be hook or be crook. You'd better take care o' yourself, avic, for so sure as ye get a drop taken or do a single thing, if it was only lettin' the donkey out to graze be the road, they'll grab ye, sure as yer name's Ned Mahony. Ochone, sure, I don't know what charm they do be workin' to dacent country boys to turn them agin their own flesh and blood."

"Mebbe it's the big pay they do be gettin'. But sure whatever it is, there does be two sides to them. When the fella himself is there, he's the same as he always was, but let the peeler get uppermost and faith ye may whistle for any sight or scent o' decency in them."

"For a time there Bess Naughten was tellin' me that Jim an' herself had the heart put across them for fear they were after his license, an' sure the secret of it all was Brady was thinkin' that it was Naughten was shyin' the things at him. Did ye ever hear such foolishness? As if a man grown would be after doin' a thrick like that. But the queer thing is that even now when he knows right well that it was all the doin' o' the child the sergeant is as much

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on his high horse as ever. She can't make head or tail o' it."

"Talk o' the devil an' ye'll hear the whisk o' his tail," exclaimed Ned, as Jim Naughten turned in at the cottage door.

"What were ye sayin' about me?" asked the publican as he took off his hat and sat down on the chair that Mrs. Mahony had hospitably hastened to dust off with her apron and set by the kitchen fire.

"Sorra a ha'porth o' good, just that you and the sergeant are gettin' mighty thick all of a sudden," said Ned. "Herself here was tellin' me that ye're thinkin' o' sellin' out the pub and joinin' the force yerself."

"Orrah go long wid ye, Ned; ye may well be talkin' and you trainin' yer boy to be droppin' rotten eggs on the poor men an' they only doin' their duty. It was only yesterday that Hennessy be way o' nothing tried to get me talkin' about yerself an' the boys that do be down here of a night. Faith he thought he was doin' it fine an' that I hadn't a notion what he was after, but herself an' meself had a fine laugh after the poor omadhaun went out. It's my opinion the two o' them have it med up

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between them that there is some kind o' plot agin the government an' that you are the very heart's core of it."

"Ah, then for God's sake, Naughten, what 'd put the like o' that in their heads?"

"I couldn't rightly say, unless it was some word the child let slip when they had him up there. He was that frightened you wouldn't know what he'd be sayin'."

Nora got up and went to the back door calling, "Mickeen, Mickeen, come here, avic, your mammy wants ye." As the lad came in she took him on her knee beside the fire and began to question him. "What did ye say to the police when they had ye up there? Did they ask ye anything about yer da?" The child shook his head. "No, they didn't. Sergeant Brady asked me who put me up to be throwin' the things at him, an' I said that sorra a one had said a word about it; that I'd thought o' it meself, for I'd heard them tellin' about Peter O'Connor an' the fine, an' about the ould still in the mountains an' the like o' that, an' that I thought me da would be thinkin' the world an' all o' me if I could make a fool o' the peeler." His elders exchanged glances above his head

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as he told his tale, and when he had finished Nora sent him off to play again before they opened their mouths.

"Faith it's no wonder they're black," murmured Ned. "He has dished my kettle o' fish all right."

"Nonsense, man dear," interjected Naughten. "Sure no one would be payin' any heed to the talk o' a frightened child like Mickeen there."

"I'm not so sure," said Nora. "I'm thinkin' that the sergeant 'd be quick enough to take offense if he thought they were makin' a jeer at him, an' who'd blame him, after all? No one cares to have the neighbors makin' a laugh of them. But sure, be that as it may, it 'd be no reason to think any real harm o' Ned—unless, indeed," she went on, "unless he might be thinkin' they were tellin' them stories to show how easy it was to get the better o' the peeler be way of encouragin' themselves to go farther."

"I'm thinkin' that ye've hit the right nail on the head this time, ma'am," commented Jim. "That 'd be enough to put the sergeant on the track, all right, an' be the hokey," and he

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clapped his hand down on Ned's crossed leg, "that's the very reason the ould divil is keepin' clear o' us all. He thinks we wouldn't be takin' much notice o' the young lad, but 'd be on our guard wid himself, the ould hayro."

"Well, who the divil cares whether he goes smellin' around or not?" blustered Ned. "He may hang around the forge till he rots for all I care. I'm doin' nothin' agin the law, an' let him mind his business an' I'll mind mine. But let him gimme any o' his jaw an' I'll pay him out."

"Hoult yer whisht, man," expostulated his wife. "What's the good o' runnin' yer head agin a stone wall. Speak fair and easy to him an' don't be givin' him any handle agin ye atall."

"That's all very well, ma'am," said the publican, thinking the matter over, "but 'fair words butter no parsnips,' an' I'm thinkin' the sergeant 'd be liking something more than words. I've got it, Ned. Jerry O'Keeffe has two o' the finest bull pups ye ever laid eyes on, an' he was tellin' me he wanted twenty-five shillings apiece for them, but that he'd let the two go for two poun's, an' why wouldn't you

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get them off him an' give one to the sergeant? That'd shut his mouth for good an' all, for he'd see ye had no ill will to him."

"Is it cracked ye are, man? Where d'ye think I'd be gettin' two poun' or twenty-five shillings to be makin' presents to Brady?"

"Sure for why not?" interposed Nora. "Ye could sell the young pig at the next fair an' that'd bring in the price an' to spare."

"But good Lord, woman, I'll be wanting the money for the rent, an' the good will o' the sergeant isn't worth riskin' an eviction for."

"Easy now, Ned," said Jim. "Who's talkin' o' riskin' the rent. You get the two pups an' give the sergeant the worst o' the two. It'll be good enough for him, an' there's sorra a fear but ye'll get the two poun' or more for t'other over at Colonel Massy's. That slip o' a daughter o' his is mad about dogs an' she'll pay anny money for a good breed."

A week passed and things went on as usual till one day Ned wandered up the hill to the barracks with a villainously thoroughbred looking bull pup under his arm. The sergeant was sitting quietly smoking his pipe on the low bench under the guard room.

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"God save ye, sergeant," he said with a good-humored grin. "I heard ye were looking for a watch dog up here, so I brought you this," extracting the perfectly ugly pup from under his arm. "They tell me it's a good dog, an' faith its gob 'd frighten the crows."

Sergeant Brady melted. What dog fancier could resist that turned-up nose and bulging eyes, to say nothing of the fierce mouth?

"Why, I hardly like to be takin' him from ye, Ned. It's a gran' dog entirely," and he rubbed a loving and longing hand over the wrinkled muzzle.

"Och, not atall, man; sure after the way that young blagguard of a Mickeen destroyed yer uniform on ye, it's little enough to be givin' ye. Here, Kruger, over ye go to the government, though it's a mean thrick for a home ruler to be playin' on ye." So with a joke he handed over the pup and the episode of the Cahirna-cloch lamp ended in peace.

A MARCH MEMORY

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IT HAD been a "pet" day. Since early morning the sun had shone out clear and bright, and the soft warm air seemed laden with the joy of life and love and youth. We strolled along by the Grattan Road, enjoying it all, looking out to sea, watching the little waves that lapped the rocks so softly; splish! splosh! they went, and off again, like children slipping up to gently kiss their mother, and then run laughing away.

We turned round the corner on to the tram track and passed the houses quickly, impatient to face the bay once more. And when we came on it again its whole face had changed. The little breeze had died away, and the water stretched out before us without a ripple, deep purple blue, steel gray and clear limpid green, dotted here and there with fishing smacks resting motionless—like gulls on the water, spreading their brown sails in vain to catch the vanished breeze.

The sun had begun to think of bed, and cov-

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ered the blue with a faint pink blush showing purple as it reached the hills of Clare. There was a great hush over the whole world.

Suddenly a sound broke in: "Ma-a! Ma-a!"—a new-born lamb crying to its mother—the embodiment of the spirit of spring. With one accord we turned up the side road, following the sound; one field after another we peeped into, but no sign of the lamb! And higher, still higher, the sound came again—Ma-a! Ma-a! baby voices luring us up the hill.

At the very top field we were rewarded; five wee lambkins were gathered there; one but just come into the world lay bleating on its side, its long legs stretched helplessly, too weak to uphold its little woolly body; the four others stood watching it with baby eyes of wonder, answering its feeble cries encouragingly, then racing off in childlike sport. They had a regular game of "tig" and then "hide and go seek." One boisterous, sturdy youngster with a big black patch on its nose was the leader in the fun.

For a full quarter of an hour we stood there, losing all count of the minutes, till we heard a cheery voice calling: "Well, the spring has

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rightly come now, glory be to God! But ye'd better be movin' or ye'll catch yer death; it's brave an' cold when the sun goes down."

"Ye're right there, Tom," I answered. "Are you going down to the town?"

The old man laughed—"Sure it's not up here I'd be stayin', ashoreen; but I'll go down by the road; it's powerful chilly by the water comin' on toward night."

"We'll all go down together," said my companion, "but it's longer by the road."

"Sure, then, we must shorten it," declared Tom. "Ye know that story, don't ye?"

Without waiting for an answer old Tom settled down to tell the tale as we faced the hill.

"There was a powerful strong farmer livin' down on the road to Athenry; he had fine land and well stocked an' his three sons 'd be wonderin' how he'd divide it when he was gone. There was a big, long, lonely road leadin' up to the farm, an' one day he took the eldest out to go to the fair, an' as they were goin' along the old man spoke out his mind an' says he, 'Shan, I'd be sorry to split up the bit o' land. So I'm thinkin' I'll give it to whichever of ye best shortens the road for me an',' says he, 'I'll give

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ye the first chance, as ye were the first to come.'

"Well, Shan was a smart enough chap, an' he says to himself, 'I'll be shortenin' that road somehow,' an' he thought, an' he thought, but sorra a thing 'd come into his head but to be movin' the gate farther down the road. So one fine day the old man kem out of the door an' found me brave Shan diggin' up the gate post an' workin' away for dear life. 'What on the livin' earth are ye doin', ye omadhaun ye?' he shouted at him. 'Shortenin' the road for sure,' says he. 'Ye blitherin idgit ye, come out o' that,' says the father, 'an don't be ruinin' the gate.' An' wid that he gev the chance to the next son.

"Now, Shemus was a slow kind o' lad an' night an' day he'd be thinkin' 'How'll I shorten that road?' One night it struck him, an' in the mornin' he got up an' off wid him an' never a sight of him did they get till evenin', when he kem in all in a sweat an' grinnin' an' leppin' an' shoutin', 'Come on, father, come on till I show ye how I've shortened the road.' The old man an' the two other boys followed him out, an' half way down the road, an' there they stopped, for hadn't the fool planted a whole

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hedge o' blackthorn right across the way!
Well, I can tell ye the father was rightly mad
then an' the other two raised a shout of laughin'
ye'd hear on the top o' Croagh Patrick, an'
would ye believe it! the poor innocent had never
thought that he was cuttin' off the road to the
town an' that not as much as a calf could be
driven to the market!

"The whole o' the next mornin' they were
diggin' up the hedge; an' when the job was
done the young lad turned to the father an'
says he: 'Will ye take a walk wid me,' he says,
'an' see what I can do? An' the two started
down the road. No sooner were they out o' the
gate than Dan started tellin' a fine story, an'
they never noticed the miles slippin' by. 'An'
now, father,' says he, 'didn't I shorten the road
for ye?' An' so he got the farm an' stock an'
all an' married the girl he had his eye on an'
lived happy ever after."

"That's a fine story, Tom, but it has only
shortened half the road home; so you'll have
to tell another to get us the rest of the way."

"To tell ye the truth, asthoreen, I haven't
the heart for story tellin' the day, thinkin' o'

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poor old Martin McDonagh, God comfort him!"

"Martin McDonagh! Is that the old chap that is always making the Stations in the West?" we both exclaimed.

"Yes, sure, didn't ye hear about his son bein' drowned on Sunday?"

"No, God rest him! How did it happen?"

"Well, it's a long story, for his misfortunes began six or eight years ago, an' young Martin's drownin' is only cappin' it all. Ye know that big granite house near the barracks wid its back to the rapids above the weir?"

We both nodded assent.

"It's there Martin lives, an' it was takin' that house began it all. They do say there is some onluck on that house, whatever it is, but whether that's true or no, poor Martin has had the height o' misfortune since he went into it. First his woman, God rest her! slipped comin' down the stairs one night an' died from the fall. She had wakened thinkin', she said, one o' the children was cryin', an' o' course she got up. When she kem to the head o' the stairs she saw a strange woman, just the height o' yer knee, cryin' an' moanin', an' she was so feared

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she just slipped, fell the whole length o' the stairs, an' in a week she was dead.

"The old man was heartbroken, though he was that dogged he wouldn't move out o' the house even then, though all the neighbors begged an' implored o' him to go before worse 'd happen; but not a bit o' him 'd stir. 'It was the will o' God she'd go,' he said, 'an' welcome be His holy will,' an' that was all ye'd get out o' him.

"He was a baker in them days an' had a fine trade, but, old fool that he was, the home flour wasn't good enough for him, an' he got every bit he used from England. The traveler used to come roun' every six months or so, an' each time he kem old Martin 'd give him forty, fifty, or mebbe a hundred poun', but narry a receipt the rogue 'd give him. 'Just enter it in your books, Mr. McDonagh,' he'd say, an' old Martin, who was as honest as the day, never misdoubted him. This had been goin' on for a good bit afore the wife was took, an' it was over four hundred pounds he'd paid to the scoundrel when he got a letter from the firm callin' on him for the money. He wrote off tellin' them he'd paid it all to the traveler, an'

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that there must be some mistake, but all the answer he got was to show his receipts. That he couldn't do, an' he was sold out afore his woman was a year in the grave. O' course there wasn't one in the county but knew that he'd paid, for there isn't a more upright man than Martin McDonagh between the four seas o' Ireland, but it weighed on him that the judge and jury wouldn't take his word on it, an' he got kind o' dark an' queer, an' d' never speak a word to anny one but just go from chapel to chapel sayin' his beads an' makin' the roun' o' the Stations.

"His son, young Martin, was a clerk up in the court house; as fine a lad as ye'd lay eyes one, God be with him! good an' steady an' strong, an' the best swimmer an' hurler in the country, or this side o' it anny how, an' it's many a one is heartsore thinkin' o' him the night. Sunday was the confraternity mornin', an' glory be to God an' His holy Mother! Martin was at the altar wid the rest; indeed, the boy was never known to miss, an' that's the great comfort the father an' sister have now. After he'd had his breakfast he started out wid John Laine an' Ned Burke, an' the three o'

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them took a boat out on the lake. It was about twelve, an' they were turned for home an' just in the river when a gale o' wind got up, an' before they could shift the sail over went the boat and the three o' them were thrown into the water. The other two were no good at the swimmin' an' so they struck out for the reeds at the side an' held on, though poor Martin shouted at them to keep in the middle or they'd be stuck in the mud; but it 'd be better had he followed them himself, for they were got out by a passin' boat while he was caught in the current an' swep' down the rapids an' over the weir an' the life dashed out o' him on the rocks before a thing could be done.

"Ol' Martin's back garden ran down to the rapids, an' as God would have it so, the poor ol' fellow was stannin' watchin' the water rushin' an' dashing up in white spray on the rocks when down in the verra middle of it all, tossin' about like a bit o' cork, he saw his only son. Mary have pity on us! that was a terrible sight for the poor broken down ol' man, an' with one awful cry that brought the daughter runnin' out he fell on his knees an' raisin' his han's to heaven he called out, 'Into Thy han's,

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O Lord, I commend his spirit'; an' wid that he fell in a dead faint on the groun'. The daughter was like to take leave o' her senses, for she had seen nothin' an' didn't know what had come over the father. But, God comfort her! the creature, she knew soon enough, for hardly had she got the ol' man carried in when they brought in all that was left o' the fine strappin' lad that had gone out that mornin'.'

"It's a terrible tragedy, Tom, but do you really think the unluck of the house had anything to say to it?"

"Who knows! There is many a queer thing happens, an' A'mighty God allows many a trouble, glory be to His name. But it's not good to be talkin' o' them things, asthore; an' besides, we're into the town now, so God speed ye both, an' bring ye safe home."

"God speed you kindly, Tom, and thanks for shortening the road."

We turned off down by the Cladach. The sun had quite gone and the night was dark and chilly. As we passed over the bridge we stood for a moment looking at the back of old Martin's house, picturing the tragic happenings of the day before. And as we stood the weird

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moaning and despairing wail of the caione was borne across the water—"Och! och! och ahone," it came through the darkness, again and again, till involuntarily we caught hands and simply ran toward the friendly lights and the sight and sound of our fellow-men.

"Histories make men wise; poets witty"—Bacon

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